A CRITIQUE OF THE POLITICS OF STALINISM BY PHIL SHARPE

An important work in the mid 1950’s outlined the views of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union concerning philosophy, history and politics.(1) This critique will concentrate on politics in order to try and outline the differences between Stalinism and revolutionary Marxism. It could be argued that this type of study is irrelevant since the demise of Stalinism. We would dispute this claim and argue that the views of Stalinism are still influential and constitute a problem in relation to the development of genuinely revolutionary Marxism. In other words we will try to indicate that Stalinism has brought about the dilution of the world view of more principled types of Marxism and so has resulted in a legacy of reformist and opportunist ideas. However, we also want to suggest that in certain instances the understanding of Stalinism may be beneficial concerning our knowledge of the world such as in relation to the connection of socialism and peace. In this context we would acknowledge the beneficial aspects of Stalinism. Nevertheless, despite these qualifications this critique has been prompted by the understanding that Stalinism became counterrevolutionary and was opposed to the interests of the working class, but it still promoted an ideology that attempted to establish that it upheld the principles of Marxism and socialism. It is this claim that we will attempt to reject in this review.

The authors claim that the prospect of the victory of socialism is inevitable because of the character of definite laws of historical development. (2) They do not mean that the dynamics of supposed objective laws can bring about socialism without the role of the class struggle and political events may either undermine or generate the prospect of the success of socialism. But in the long-term they do not envisage the defeat of the attempt to realise socialism. This confidence is based on the apparent success of the October revolution and the expansion of the ‘socialist bloc’ in the post-war period. However, the durability of Stalinism was connected to the defeat of the working class in the 1930’s, which meant the success of international proletarian revolution did not undermine the domination of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR. The ultimate expression of the reactionary policy of Stalinism was the pact with Nazi Germany which contributed to demoralising the international working class. This opportunism did not persuade Hitler not to invade the USSR. However despite a horrific war, the USSR was able to expand. Its domination of Eastern Europe led to the formation of the so-called socialist bloc. But this development was not based on any genuine working class mobilisation and instead what occurred was the consolidation of the social power of the USSR. In the West, the Stalinist parties were not encouraged to lead a struggle for power, and instead they helped to stabilise capitalism.

Consequently, the expression of confidence in the success of socialism actually indicates optimism that the USSR can continue to develop its influence within the world. In contrast, the prospect for the advance of genuine proletarian revolution is being undermined by the reactionary role of American imperialism, the USSR and Stalinism, and the moderating influence of Social Democracy. These forces constitute an important ideological and political force that in practice undermines the prospect of the class struggle making advances towards socialism. In the actual post-war situation the forces for the stabilisation of capitalism are stronger than the marginalised and small organisations that are trying to aim for socialism and influence the working class in that manner. Only in the 1970’s is this unfavourable situation challenged by economic and political crisis, but the ruling class consolidates itself in order to promote the neoliberal offensive and so put the working class and trade unions onto the defensive. In other words the very class struggle has not generated many favourable opportunities for aspiring to realise socialism in the post-war period. Instead the strength of reaction means that the conception of the inevitability of socialism via the role of historical necessity is seriously challenged. The strength of the ideology of the many forms of reaction means that it is immensely difficult to develop revolutionary consciousness. The limitations of the few principled Marxist organisations is also an expression of the influence of reformism and Stalinism. Consequently very few people, mostly limited to the intelligentsia, are able to recognise the principled revolutionary standpoint of the ideas of Marx. But even in this context, the ideas of Marx have often been distorted by the influence of reformism, Stalinism and sceptical intellectuals. (3)

However the forces of Stalinism are optimistic about the progress of socialism. This is because they conceive of it in terms of the expansion of the USSR and not in the context of genuine class struggle. This optimism is expressed in the view that revolutionary ideas are acquiring influence and becoming a practical material force. In contrast the ideas of the bourgeoisie are becoming less popular because they represent a system in decline. Consequently the revolutionary ideas are superior and express historical development: “However, the new ideology possesses a decisive advantage in that it reflects the demands of social development. Revolutionary ideas can be forbidden but they cannot be destroyed. Sooner or later they take possession of the masses, spur them to action, and then comes the end of the old system. Thus social ideas are interwoven in the natural course of historical development.”(4) This conception does not explain the difficulties in the development of revolutionary ideas in the last 50 years, and nor does it accurately refer to the situation related to the dynamic progress of capitalism in the 1950’s. But this approach could be plausible when referring to the October revolution, and in relation to justifying the Soviet military invasion of Eastern Europe as an expression of the advance of socialism. Hence these specific situations are projected to mean that the objective course of history is being realised by the working class, via the influence of revolutionary ideas, but this understanding is significantly qualified to mean that the working class is led by a party. The role of the Marxist-Leninist Party is crucial if the prospect of socialist transition is to be realised. They are the active transmitter of revolutionary ideas, which are carried out in practice by the working class: “The social revolution of the proletariat is the first revolution in history in which the revolutionary vanguard of the working masses – the Marxist-Leninist party – clearly realises the objective significance of its historical actions and consciously guides the struggle of the masses to achieve a revolutionary change of the existing system.”(5)

Consequently, the optimism becomes understandable. The logic of the class struggle is not connected to the complexity of the spontaneous actions of the workers via the role of the trade unions. Instead what is crucial for success is the establishment of a relationship of the working class to the Marxist-Leninist, or Stalinist party. Only with this leadership is it possible to realise the success of revolution and to bring about a situation in which progressive ideas become triumphant. This implies that the role of a reformist or Trotskyist party cannot bring about the success of the struggle for revolution. Instead the importance of the Marxist-Leninist party is crucial if the possibility to transform the class struggle into the overthrow of capitalism is to be realised. This claim has been empirically expressed by the October revolution, the revolutions in Eastern Europe and Asia. However what is not explained is that these apparent immaculate examples of the relationship of party and class in the revolutionary process, and the connected success of ideas of social development, are in actuality an expression of the bureaucratic domination of the party over the class. In this sense the party does not express the aspirations of the class, and instead the class is utilised – apart from the genuine October revolution – as foot soldiers in order to implement the aims of the Soviet bureaucracy. This point is expressed by the above quote because only the party understands the true significance of the actions of the working class. Therefore only the party can guide the workers to success in the revolutionary process. Consequently it would be a contradiction in terms for the working class – influenced by reactionary ideas – to be able to realise the success of the revolution without the guidance of the party. The working class is only able to grasp revolutionary ideas via the mediation of the party. This means the conception of revolutionary practice is expressed by the role of party led revolution. The activity of the working class is minimised in this process. Consequently the class struggle can be conceived as being successful because the activity of the party has brought about the overthrow of capitalism in many areas of the world. The bureaucratic character of this process can be justified because of the elitist conception of the relationship of the party to the class. This standpoint is also justified by the view that the party has the monopoly of revolutionary ideas, and the transmission of these ideas into the practice of the class occurs under the instructions of the party.

Such elitism is also justified in the conception of socialism which is based on the role of the party understanding the laws of social development and so being able to promote a planned economy based on balanced proportions between the different sectors of the economy. This standpoint does not allow for the significance of industrial democracy and the genuine participation of the producers and consumers in the economic progress of socialism. The point is that only the party is considered to be able to develop itself as a conscious instrument that understands the economic laws of socialism, and so in this sense acts on behalf of the rest of the population. In terms of being able to generate the highest levels of consciousness it is possible for the party to administer the economy without the development of major problems and tensions. This standpoint glosses over the various periods of crisis such as the 1930’s when forced collectivisation and rapid industrialisation led to a situation of effective crisis. Hence the economic history of the Soviet Union cannot be explained without the motivation of the bureaucracy to become a dominant class. It could be argued that this aspiration undermined the actual rational and balanced development of the economy. For example, there always was an emphasis on the creation of the means of production rather than consumer goods. But this process was suitable for accumulation and the war economy.(6) The point is that the domination of the party in a situation of the low development of the productive forces led to the bureaucratic creation of new forms of exploitation rather than socialism based on industrial democracy and the participation of the workers and peasants. However, this point is glossed over by the emphasis of the book on the party’s capacity to promote socialism. This is a boast without content.

The book conceives of historical materialism as the science of historical development. In these terms it is possible to justify the view that Lenin could predict the October revolution, and the events in Eastern Europe were also the logical outcome of the victory of the USSR in the Second World War. (Ironically the bourgeois view of the collapse of socialism is dismissed as an expression of irrational thought) But what is most primary is the ability of the party to utilise historical materialism in order to influence the course of events: “The success of its activities depends to a considerable extent on how accurately, how scientifically it is able to assess the objective conditions of its struggle, and to define its end and means in accordance with the actual course of historical events.”(7) What is being outlined is the view that the party that understands national and international developments is able to influence and lead the process of revolutionary change. There is no mention of the importance of the working class in this regard because it is assumed that their role is to recognise the wisdom of the party. This standpoint ultimately is reduced to the view that the only type of class struggle that is valid and permissible is that which occurs under the leadership of the party. The type of spontaneous revolution that occurred in Spain in the 1930’s is treated with suspicion. Hence the only principled process of change is the party revolution. Thus it is actually in the elitist interests of the party to discourage any expression of class struggle that could develop outside of its control, and this was shown by the indifference of the French Communist party towards militant actions by the workers in the 1930’s and 1968. Hence to claim that the class struggle is the: ‘driving force of development of society’ has to be qualified by the recognition that this standpoint effectively means that the working class has to be controlled by the domination of the party. (8) Consequently, the struggle for peace, democracy and socialism has to be as a result of the connection of the party to the class. This development also implies that this struggle conforms to the interests of the USSR. It would be inconceivable to suggest that it is possible to aspire to socialism without that aim being connected to the interests of the USSR. This means the most definite political basis of the attempt to overthrow capitalism is under the leadership of a Communist Party aligned with the USSR.

This standpoint explains the enduring hostility of the Stalinists towards Trotskyists, because the latter threaten to repudiate the claim of the former to represent the working class and defend the aim of international socialism. Instead the Trotskyists argue that Stalinism represents a counterrevolutionary force that rejects the aim of world revolution and instead supports accommodation with the forces of imperialism and capitalism. They suggest that the Stalinists do not support the aims of class struggle and instead have an opportunist attitude towards the aim of socialism. This viewpoint is vehemently denied by the Stalinists, who claim to have a unique understanding of historical materialism that is able to promote the interests of the class struggle. Indeed they would argue that proletarian revolution has only occurred under the leadership of Marxism-Leninism. In reply, the Trotskyists would suggest that the Bolshevik revolution was the only authentic expression of working class struggle, and the events in Eastern Europe represented a bureaucratic overthrow of capitalism, which was based on the influence of the USSR. Stalinism does not represent a revolutionary party that unites itself with the working class in a principled manner. Thus Trotskyism, of all types, denies the Stalinist claim to be the principled legacy of Marx, Engels and Lenin, and instead outlines various arguments as to why Stalinism cannot carry out proletarian revolution, except in the most bureaucratic and reactionary manner that does not promote human emancipation.

Indeed the Stalinists even try to claim credit for the working class struggle that has occurred in order to defend democracy, advance peace and national progress. Formally, there is an acknowledgement of the importance of class struggle for social development in terms of the resolution of the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production. It is also emphasised that revolution, or the success of the class struggle, is required in order to bring about social transformation: “The key question of revolution is the question of political power, of its transference into the hands of the class that embodies the new production relations. It is this new political power that is the force that introduces the changes in the economic and social relations of society that have matured.”(9) What is omitted by this understanding is recognition that this process of change is dependent on the role of the party, and this organisation acts ‘on behalf’ of the working class. Hence the party becomes the real political power, after a delayed period in Russia, or immediately as in Eastern Europe. Hence instead of the working class, the party assumes state power, and so the state effectively belongs to the party. This enables the party to become the ruling class because of its domination of the state and related ability to control the economy. But it has to justify this bureaucratic process by outlining it in terms of an authentic or genuine proletarian revolution based on the dynamics of the class struggle. Hence there is a certain tension between aspects of the theory which still attempts to uphold the conception of proletarian revolution, in contrast to the actual development of reality, which is based on the role of the dominant bureaucratic party. Consequently, there are also aspects of the theory that justify explicitly the leading role of the party and the connected subordinate role of the class. Indeed, the very conception of the active and creative role of the masses is often understood to mean an expression of the hegemonic role of the party in the revolutionary process. Specifically, the limited and defensive economic struggle of the workers is conceived as being superseded by the higher form of political struggle, which is led by the party. This does not undermine the creative importance of the mass actions of the workers, but this is how the revolutionary process becomes conceived and expressed. The dialectic is that the party is able to promote the highest forms of the class struggle because they understand the laws of social development. The assumption is that the party expresses the role of theory and the working class expresses it in practice. Hence the party is not aspiring to an elitist relationship to the working class, and instead develops as a leading force because of the inability of the class as a whole to become an expression of socialist consciousness. It is the very role of the party to influence the class in terms of the aims of socialism as the basis of the logic of the class struggle.

In other words the spontaneity of the class struggle cannot overcome the limitations of bourgeois ideology, that promotes sectionalism and reformism, and instead the ideological transformation that is required can only be generated by the role of the Marxist-Leninist party: “The ideological struggle of the proletariat, involves, above all the working out of a world outlook, a scientific theory which will show the working class the path to liberation. The struggle of the working class for its immediate interests, the trade union struggle in particular, is not sufficient to give birth to socialist views. The doctrine of socialism could be created only on the basis of the most advanced philosophical, economic and political theories.”(10) It could be argued that this standpoint is very similar to the approach of Lenin, but the formulations of the ‘Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism’, unlike Lenin do not explain the dynamic possibilities of the relationship between party and class. Instead the emphasis is on the primary role of the party in providing the working class with the world outlook needed for successful class struggle. Formally the combined relationship of the party with the class is outlined, but this is justified in terms of the class supporting the world outlook provided by the party. There is no sense that the experience of the class contributes to the development of the theory of the party. In other words the relationship of theory and practice is outlined in one-sided terms. The party provides the theory which is accepted by the workers in the process of the class struggle. Hence the role that economic struggle, such as strikes, contributes to the prospects of success in the aim of the overthrow of capitalism is not explained. Instead the character of the higher forms of political struggle is outlined in terms of the formation of the party: “The aims and methods of political struggle demand different, higher forms of working class organisation, above all the creation of a political party of the proletariat.”(11) This approach implies that the dynamic and crucial aspect of the class struggle is the creation of the party. It is in these terms that the party provides the strategy, tactics and aims of the highest forms of the class struggle. In contrast, the working class can only develop a lower form of economic struggle that has to be superseded by the struggle for political power that is led and promoted by the role of the party.

This approach implies that the act of revolution is a coup led by and orchestrated by the party elite. The authors deny this claim in the most ambiguous terms: “The Communist Party organises the actions of the masses, directs the masses, but does not attempt to make a revolution “for them” with its own forces.”(12) The rejection of a coup is based on the understanding that the act of insurrection is not based merely on the role of the party, and instead the working class are active participants. But it is accepted that the dominant role is with the party that directs and organises the workers to carry out insurrection. Hence the conception of party revolution is developed and justified, and the recognition that this is a popular revolution is reduced to the role of the effects of the revolutionary process in terms of the working class obtaining state power and ending exploitation: “The transition from capitalism to socialism can take place only through the setting up of working class power.”(13) This conclusion attempts to deny the fact that if the party dominates the process of change, the result, as in Eastern Europe, is the creation of the party state. If the working class has a subordinated role in the generation of transformation, this means the bureaucratic party will determine the character of the state apparatus. What has occurred cannot be an authentic revolutionary process because the working class is dictated by the party, and so the outcome is the creation of the party state and not the development of genuinely socialist regime based on the importance of working class organisations. This conclusion can be glossed over by defining socialism as the demise of capitalist property relations and their replacement by social ownership. Such an understanding denies the fact the active forces of social change is the party, and the working class has a subordinated role. This process can be justified in Marxist terms by transforming the actual process of change into a myth: “To take away the property of the ruling classes and hand it over to the whole of society, state power must be taken from the capitalists and put into the hands of the working people. The bourgeois state is replaced by a state of the working people.”(14) The actual dynamics of the development of the party state means the state is controlled by a bureaucracy and not the working class. This is because the process of change was not based on the development of an authentic proletarian revolution. In relation to the October revolution, the state was always based on bureaucratic deformations because of the rapid erosion of Soviet democracy and the establishment of single party rule. (However this state was still originally accountable to the working class) But, the Stalinists are wary of the lessons of the October revolution, which occurred via the role of mass working class organisations. Thus their model of transformation is actually the bureaucratic process that occurred in Eastern Europe. This change was strictly controlled by the party, and the state was always dominated by the party and so could not be accountable to the working class.

The theory of Stalinism has to suggest that the revolutionary process was an authentic expression of the importance of the working class, and that the workers are building socialism. But when this understanding is analysed closely, the dominant role of the party cannot be denied in relation to both the overthrow of capitalism and the construction of socialism: “Resolute and skilful direction, carried out by the Marxist parties, of the struggle of the masses is one of the principled conditions on which the victory of the proletarian revolution depends.”(15) What is not explained is how the effective direction of the development of the revolutionary struggle by the party cannot ultimately result in the domination of the process of change by the party. This outcome did not immediately happen in the October revolution because the actions of the party was influenced by the militant working class that expressed its aspirations through the popular organs of struggle, or the Soviets. But the process of bureaucratic degeneration meant the party was able to completely dominate the working class, and the result was ideological justification of the understanding of the elite relationship of party to class. This meant in ideological terms the actual creative dynamism of the class struggle had to be denied by Stalinism and the conception of authentic proletarian revolution had to be diluted and altered into justification for the rule of the party. In these terms the October revolution is not conceived as different from the process of the installation of the rule of the bureaucracy in Eastern Europe.

Trotskyism has had difficulty in rejecting the role of the Stalinist party because it sometimes shares the illusions of vanguardism. Hence the various Trotskyist parties have concentrated on the opportunist limitations of the theory of socialism in one country, and the rejection of the perspective of permanent revolution by the Stalinists. But actually the conception of party organisation defended by the Stalinists is also problematic and results in the rejection of principled class struggle. The Stalinists do not consider that the party should be the instrument of the class, and instead justify the view that the class should act in accordance with the objectives of the party. This standpoint can only result in the rejection of principled class struggle and the aim of authentic proletarian revolution. Instead Leninism is conceived in bureaucratised terms and as a pretext for the regime of the party-state elite. It can be argued that the Stalinist understanding of the party is one of the most important ideological aspects that justifies its political role and the related subordination of the class struggle to its opportunist requirements. Trotskyism has made concessions to Stalinism to the extent that it has not effectively rejected the bureaucratic conception of the party and replaced it with a more democratic and Marxist understanding. But in order to break with the Stalinist conception of the party it is necessary to be critical of Lenin’s ‘What is to be done’, and its elitist aspects. In this principled manner we can outline the revolutionary importance of the working class, and therefore establish the role of the relationship between party and class in 1917.

In a limited manner, the Stalinists are aware that their approach towards the party raises serious questions about the standpoint of authentic proletarian revolution. This is why they continually have to formally outline the importance of the class struggle for historical development. In this sense they have to try and restrict the role of the party to what they understand to be the premises of Marxist orthodoxy.

Formally, the emphasis of the Stalinist standpoint upholds the creative and dynamic role of the working class in the process of social transformation. It is argued that the masses have the dominant role in historical development. But these forces have the leadership of parties, which can include great individuals, who express the standpoint of social progress. The role of the leader is to recognise what is necessary in order to enhance the creative activity of the people in order to transform history. This does not mean the justification of the cult of the individual who justifies despotic power that undermines the ability of the people to participate in the process of change. This is a reference to the role of Stalin who is said to have undermined the democratic character of socialism by his individual excesses. But this problem of the corruption of power does not alter the importance of the individual in history: “Without authoritative leaders who have close ties with the masses and are popular among them there can be no organised socialist movement, there cannot be great victories of socialism.”(16)

In other words the prospects of the success of the struggle for socialism depend upon the quality of the individual leadership of the party. Not only have the masses to be influenced by the world view provided by the party, and led by the party in the process of revolution, but this relationship is often reduced to the ability of an outstanding individual leader to formulate the strategy and tactics of the potential for the overthrow of capitalism. Formally, the emphasis is on the importance of the collective struggle of the working class within capitalism as the basis of social change, and the role of the masses expresses the potential for historical transformation, but this development can be personified by individual leaders like Lenin. Trotskyists would not disagree with this approach, and would agree that the role of Lenin was vital to the success of the October revolution. But also what is vital was the ability of the working class to create organs of popular democracy, the Soviets, which could express the possibility to construct an alternative type of society. Lenin’s greatness was to recognise the revolutionary possibilities of workers in struggle. This point may be formally supported by the Stalinists, but their emphasis is on the ability of the party, via its wise leadership, to formulate the politics of the class struggle and therefore express the dynamic aspects of the process of revolutionary change.

The Stalinists also defend their views on politics in terms of the understanding that the development of the productive forces is the major objective basis of social progress, and this is expressed by the development of socialism, or the type of society based on the leadership of the CPSU. It is argued that the creative activity of people is expressing these objective laws of history, and this contrasts with capitalism which a society in decline. Capitalism has changed from a society of social development into a system of decay and the promotion of reactionary and imperialist forces. In contrast the construction of socialism is promoting the classless society: “Socialism, on the contrary, liberates the oppressed and exploited. It has no privileged classes. All the fruits of progress go to working people. The steady growth of the material well-being and culture of the masses, the flowering of democracy for working people, is a law of socialist development.”(17) This description is empirically in conflict with the actual history of the despotism of Stalin, and the lack of democracy because of one party rule. Furthermore, there is no industrial democracy or participation of working people in the operation of the planned economy. However, the Stalinists could claim that industrial development under the nationalised economy has led to improved material benefits, and they would argue that democracy represents the importance of the Soviets, which are accountable to the people, via the possibility of the recall of delegates who are deemed to be unsatisfactory. Hence there is some distorted truth in the claims about social progress represented by socialism. What is most problematical is the claim that social progress is expressed by conscious planned economic development. It is questionable whether the economy is truly planned because of the bureaucratic character of the organisation of economic activity. (18) Instead we can agree that the rapid development of industrialisation under the strict supervision of the party has led to limited material and cultural advance. But this progress does not represent the creation of an authentic socialist society.

The major claim that needs to be refuted is that the supposed development of socialism has led to the end of exploitation. The USSR has not resulted in the end of the alienation and exploitation of the working class, because the state is not an expression of the influence and interests of the working class and instead is dominated by the party elite. This means the nationalised economy that is under the supervision of the state cannot express the interests of working people, and instead promotes exploitation within the relations of production.(19) However, this point cannot be admitted by the ideology of the party because such an admission would undermine its credibility that socialism has been constructed in the USSR. Instead an illusory conception of socialism has to be defended. This does not mean that the ideology is merely a collection of false claims because this would suggest a deliberate process of deception that is a crude expression of the imperatives of power. Instead we could suggest more reasonably that the ideology is a combination of distorted views of reality and a genuine attempt to interpret a contemporary form of Marxism-Leninism.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CAPITALISM

The work outlines in fairly reasonable terms the Marxism understanding of capitalism, and the development of its relations of production based on the exploitation of the working class. But the discussion of economic crisis raises serious questions. It is argued that the contradiction between the social and cooperative character of production with the limits of private ownership result in a crisis of over-production. This is interpreted in the following terms: “Sooner, or later, therefore, as a result of the anarchy of production characteristic of capitalism, the vast potential of large scale industry for expansion come up against the narrow limits of consumption, the inability of markets to keep step with the growth of production. It is to be found that the mass of commodities thrown upon the market cannot be paid for by the mass of purchasers in view of their limited incomes and purchasing power.”(20) This standpoint may explain some forms of the development of crisis, and it could be considered to be a contradiction of the present recession. But it is dogmatic to reduce crisis to this one primary causal reason. In the 1950’s the problem of under-consumption was addressed by wage increases, and the expansionist role of public expenditure, and in the era of neo-liberalism the limitations represented by low wages was offset by cheap credit. Indeed it is admitted by the Stalinists that the standard of living has improved for the working class in the capitalist countries during the 1950’s, because of the struggle by the trade unions to increase wages, and so this implies that the problem of under-consumption had been temporarily resolved. Indeed, the actual significance of economic crisis for political developments is not addressed, and instead there is emphasis on the major dynamic of social transformation being caused by the increasing co-operative character of labour which intensifies the contradiction between the social character of production and the private form of appropriation. The outcome of this contradiction is the generation of revolutionary transformation.

Despite the lack of analysis of the implications of this analysis, it could be argued that the authors have unintentionally established that crisis is a secondary aspect of the development of the prospect of change, and that what is more important is that the generation of the social power of labour and the generation of its capacity to challenge capital. In other words, the question of the prospect of social change is a combination of strategy with the collective power of discontented social forces, as Olin Wright explains: “First, it depends upon the consciously pursued strategies and the relative power of the social actors who support and oppose the alternative in question. Strategy matters because emancipatory alternatives are very unlikely to just “happen”; they can only come about because people work to implement them, and are able to overcome various obstacles and forms of opposition. The probability of ultimate success, then, depends upon the balance of power of contending social forces consciously attempting to implement or resist emancipatory transformation.”(21) The point is that the changes within capitalism of the recent period could have undermined the collective character of labour, and so decreased its ability to transform society. This was not an issue in the 1950’s when the process of industrialisation was still very important and the cohesiveness of the working class was strong. Unfortunately, the Stalinists do not develop this perspective into a strategy for change and instead limit themselves to justifying a conception of an objective process of development that is conceived in automatic rather than strategic terms. (This problem in partially corrected in later analysis)

But the development of the serious emphasis on political economy is inaugurated with a study of Lenin’s understanding of imperialism and its contemporary implications. It is explained that Lenin outlined the development of monopoly capital and finance capital which promoted the territorial struggle for markets and areas of investment. This process also resulted in colonial expansion and the development of geo-political competition. Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism because it represents decaying and declining productive activity and the intensification of contradictions that generate the conditions for socialism. However, the authors interpret this analysis in terms of the standpoint of socialism in one country. They argue that the economic and political contradictions of the imperialist system develop unevenly. It is concluded: “Analysing the changes due to the operation of the law of uneven development of capitalist countries in the epoch of imperialism, Lenin came to the conclusion that the victory of the revolution in all countries simultaneously was impossible, and that, on the contrary, the victory of the revolution was quite possible at first in several countries, or even a single country. This was a new theory of socialist revolution….The growth of imperialist contradictions and the uneven maturing of the revolution in the various countries made it possible to break the chain of imperialism initially at the weakest link.”(22)

But Lenin has a different starting point for his analysis of imperialism. He outlines the reasons why it has become the expression of capitalist development and has become a world system. Capitalism as imperialism has established territorial control of the world, and this results in a conflict for the re-division of the colonies and semi-colonies: “The distinctive feature of the present situation…..imperialism has grown from an embryo into the predominant system; capitalist monopolies occupy first place in economics and politics; the division of the world has been completed; on the other hand, instead of the undivided monopoly of Great Britain, we see a few imperialist powers contending for the right to share in this monopoly, and this struggle is characteristic of the whole period of the early twentieth century.”(23) The only conclusion from this analysis is that perspectives have to be based on the internationalisation of economic and politics expressed by imperialism. Thus the development of imperialism has led to the formation of rival inter-imperialist blocs that has resulted in world war. Politics must be based on this understanding, and the connected rejection of any opportunist justification of defence of the fatherland. The point being made is that the unevenness, as expressed by the dynamism of German capitalism when compared to British capital, is manifested in these international terms. Uneven development is defined by the importance of the world economy and its political conclusions. Hence it is opportunism that has a standpoint defined by national politics at the expense of an internationalist perspective. Instead the only conclusion that can be implied by Lenin is that the world war generated by inter-imperialist contradictions can only be resolved by world revolution. It is true that in other articles of 1916, Lenin defends the uneven character of the revolutionary process, but this does not undermine his overall standpoint that the basis of his approach is that of the development of the world revolution as the manifestations of the decline of capitalism. Indeed this standpoint is also accepted by Kuusinen and his co-authors when they argue: “The general crisis of capitalism could no longer be held back once the imperialist countries had started a world war with its catastrophic consequences that proved fatal for capitalism. The First World War gave a mighty impetus to all the internal processes which were driving capitalism to a general crisis…and the coming to a head of the socialist revolution.”(24) Hence it is accepted that the character of the situation is defined by the international economic crisis that is manifested in world war. But the conclusion that world revolution is the progressive outcome of this crisis becomes reduced to the view that what resulted from this crisis was the formation of the world socialist system via the development of the USSR. The struggle between world capitalism and world socialism was the expression of this revolutionary process, and this meant the continued decline of capitalism, the onset of new economic crisis and the impulse towards new wars which culminated in the Second World War. The USSR as the representation of the victory of socialism in one country is considered to be a major contributory aspect in the intensification of the contradictions of world capitalism and so helps to explain the promotion of a new development of inter-imperialist war. The very survival and progress of the USSR is identified with the character of the world revolution: “Capitalism ceased to be a single all-embracing social and economic world system. The transition to socialism began to take place on one-sixth of the globe and the struggle between capitalism and socialism became the main content of world development.”(25)

But the actuality of the national development of the productive forces in a country of low economic development could not be socialism. Instead it led to a new form of dominant class rule, because a workers state was unsuitable for the process of industrialisation and the related exploitation of the working class. (26) This also meant the renewal of economic crisis was caused by the generation of the intensification of the contradictions of capitalism as imperialism and so had little to do with the role of the USSR. By the mid 1930’s the USSR, under pressures from fascism, had become the proponents of the stabilisation of capitalism as the basis to oppose counterrevolution. This viewpoint was expressed in the support of popular frontism and opposition to the Spanish revolution. The ultimate expression of the reactionary character of Stalinist politics was expressed by the Nazi-Soviet pact. This meant even the aim of the defence of bourgeois democracy had been undermined and replaced by the politics of national survival. The futility of this standpoint was indicated by the Nazi invasion of the USSR in 1941.

However the ultimate defeat of German imperialism led to the expansion of the USSR and the development of what was defined as the extension of the world socialist system. It is argued that the effective development of world revolution has led to new forms of the crisis of capitalism, such as the demise of colonialism. What had really occurred was the consolidation of Soviet Imperialism. This process went together with Soviet support for the stabilisation of capitalism in Western Europe. The overall effective of the actions of the Stalinist bureaucracy was deeply reactionary. The idea that these actions contributed to a new form of the crisis of capitalism was illusory. In actuality the effective establishment of the hegemony of the USA over the world economy led to boom and an improvement in the living standards of the international working class. However, the Stalinist could establish some credibility for their views, because they could argue that the expansion of world socialism had decreased the area for capitalist exploitation and so made new forms of crisis more likely. But what was occurring was the renewal of capital accumulation under USA hegemony.(27) It was interesting that Stalin viciously criticised a book by Varga, who argued that USA hegemony had facilitated the prospect of capitalist stabilisation. Kuusinen tries to resolve this argument in terms of his particular conception of the theory of state monopoly capitalism. This attempts to explain both the post-war stability and the possibility of the continuation and intensification of the crisis of world capitalism. The dogmatism of Stalin is rejected but the conception of a sustained boom is also uneasily denied.

The development of state monopoly capitalism is related to Lenin’s observations about the German war economy, which was connected to extensive state intervention in order to promote the aims of maximum production. However it was the development of the economic crisis of the 1930’s that led to the role of the state in order to uphold the interests of monopoly capital that was the generalised beginnings of state monopoly capitalism. In the Second World War the war economy was based on the process of cooperation between the monopolies and the state. This means: “The essence of state monopoly capitalism…..is the direct union of the power of capitalist monopolies with the enormous power of the state. In this union the state occupies not an independent, but a subordinate position.”(28) The state is used by the monopolies as an instrument of capital accumulation, such as the development of armaments and the nationalisation of unprofitable but important industries, as with the public ownership of rail and coal mines in the UK. The government also becomes an important market for the production of the monopolies, and the state also intervenes with legislation in relation to strikes on the side of the employers. The state utilises the war economy in order to stimulate overall production, as in the USA, but excessive utilisation of economic resources for armaments can undermine economic recovery, as in the UK of the early 1950’s. It is implicitly argued that the war economy undermine the development of boom in the capitalist countries and had inflationary consequences because of the rise in public expenditure. The conception of state monopoly capitalism is utilised in order to justify the view that nationalisation was to the benefit of the monopolies and not working people. But it is also pointed out that the monopolies prefer private ownership and only view nationalisation as an emergency measure. The monopolies are aware that nationalisation could promote the development of mass movement for the creation of a socialist economy based on the domination of nationalisation. This is why they are for nationalisation only under strict limits, when it is obviously in the overall interests of the monopolies. It is possible that the aims of the state and individual monopolies can diverge, and this is one reason why the monopolies prefer private enterprise. Thus, the purpose of the state monopoly capital perspective is to deny the Social Democratic view that the capitalism has been changed and modified. The significance of the welfare state is denied. Consequently the view that the state has become the major regulator of the economy in terms of the ability to increase effective demand is denied. It is argued that the Social Democrats conflate the possibility of developing the material conditions of socialism within capitalism with the perspective that socialism can be realised by the action of the bourgeois state. Instead only a programme to overthrow the economic domination of the monopolies is sufficient to bring about principled change and the prospect of socialism.

This Stalinist standpoint would seem to be generally accurate in relation to the structural character of the post-war economy before the onset of the neo-liberal offensive in the 1980’s. However, it does underestimate the ability of Social Democracy under working class pressure to bring about changes that do modify the process of capital accumulation. The important influence of the working class meant that to a limited extent the process of capital accumulation had become compatible with the interests of the working class. This meant the creation of a welfare state, which was not just the instrument of the monopolies, but was an expression of the aspirations of the working class. Without the action of the working class the welfare state would not have been created. This situation does not vindicate Social Democracy because the very defence of the gain of the welfare state does require the continuation of the struggle against capitalism and for the realisation of socialism. But the Stalinists are wrong to dogmatically deny the significance of the welfare state. Instead the question becomes can we maintain the welfare state before the pressure increases to promote its demise? The answer to this question can only be provided by a successful resolution of the class struggle with the establishment of socialism.

What is truly dogmatic in the economic analysis of the Stalinists is the attempt to deny the empirical reality of the improvements of living standards caused by the post-war boom. The situation is characterised as being one of regular slumps, and increases in unemployment, in order to reject the theory that capitalism had overcome crisis. It is argued that the percentage of wages as part of the national income is decreasing in many capitalist countries, and the working class is often only able to obtain tolerable conditions with the precarious support of cheap credit. The utilisation of this blatant propaganda, that effectively denies the sustained boom of the post-war period, is in order to suggest that the successes of the socialist countries still provide an example to be emulated by the working class of the West: “But the advantages of the socialist mode of production are so great….the countries of the socialist camp are able to achieve ever greater successes in economic competition with the world system of capitalism. The victories gained in this world-historic competition inspire the people of the socialist countries to new feats of labour, accelerating further their rate of peaceful construction. This, at the same time, heightens the attractive power of socialism for the working people in capitalist countries.”(28) The prediction is that under these conditions the class struggle in the West will continue to intensify, and ultimately the hegemony of the USA within the imperialist bloc will be undermined by the contradictions of uneven development.

It is this part of the analysis which regresses from ideology to crude propaganda. The denial of the boom in the West is meant to reject the importance of the affluence of the working class in parts of the capitalist world, and instead to boast about the supposed material benefits of socialism. It is quite possible that this denial of the advances in the West which was one of the aspects that created a mood of anti-communism in the West. In contrast, bourgeois politicians could accurately claim: “You’ve never had it so good.” What would have been more effective would have been the presentation of realistic arguments that claimed the contradictions of capitalism had not been overcome, and instead the era of crisis would return. Ernest Mandel outlined these types of arguments in his work: ‘Late Capitalism’. (30) But he was also susceptible to making the argument that the distorted socialism of the East was still superior to the capitalism of the West. This was an acceptance of the propaganda of the Stalinists and their crude economic views. However, at least, the Stalinists attempted to explain the boom of the 1950’s. In contrast, the Trotskyists maintained a silence, and limited their views to private internal bulletins. Effectively, apart from Mandel, they preferred the primacy of practice to theory and so did not want to explain the prosperity of the West in the 1950’s. Officially, the Fourth International for the early part of the 1950’s upheld the catastrophist views of war-revolution and predicted international civil war led by Stalinism, and therefore attempt to deny the development of boom by the false perspectives of pseudo-radicalism.

Consequently, despite the limitations of the theory of state monopoly capitalism it was the most explanatory and credible ‘Marxist’ view of the development of economics in the post-war period. It explained the stabilisation of the world economy in terms of nationalisation and arms production, and reluctantly accepted the importance of American hegemony. The contemporary economic importance of the state was outlined by this theory. So, despite its propaganda aspects, the theory of state monopoly capitalism did enable limited understanding of the post-war period until the crisis of the mid 1970’s. Then the economic theory of Mandel began hegemonic, and Trotskyism could overcome its long period of silence about the post-war world economy. Trotskyism could finally indicate that it was not just a trend based on an activist programme and an analysis of Stalinism. Instead it could begin to compete with the world view of Stalinism. Ironically, this development occurred alongside a process of protracted theoretical degeneration created by the various interpretations of the Cuban revolution. The very gains of Trotskyism in relation to political economy occurred alongside a crisis of the theory of permanent revolution. Stalinism could only gain from this situation because it represented the force that incorporated Cuba into the ‘socialist camp’. Hence its political perspectives seemed more credible than Trotskyism despite the limitation of class compromise and opportunism.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

The Stalinists argue that the working class is potentially revolutionary because it represents the development of the productive forces, and is capable of collective organisation that enables it to engage in militant struggle. This means the working class has the revolutionary task of replacing capitalism with socialism, which represents its historic mission. This role has been concretely expressed in the development of the socialist bloc. (31) This conception of the historic mission is an idealist interpretation of the approach of Marx and Engels. It implies that the working class has an essence that ‘must’ or inevitably is ‘realised’ in the realisation of socialism. But the very historical experience of the 20th century indicates that the durability of capitalism, and the counterrevolutionary determination of the ruling class, means that the character of history is open-ended and not defined by a teleological purpose. For example, the success of Fascism in Germany seemed to create serious questions about the revolutionary capacity of the international working class. Whilst, the post-war period generated the boom which meant that affluence was a contributing factor that questioned the historical necessity of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Ironically, the neoliberal era has re—created the issues of poverty and unemployment that suggest the crucial importance of socialism, but the working class has become fragmented and apparently no longer capable of collective action in order to bring about social change. However, the Stalinists were able to gloss over these issues about working class capabilities because it can interpret the expansion of the USSR as the expression of socialist impulses. Thus the Soviet Union’s military might can be defined as the expression of the historic mission of the proletariat. In other words, the party elite carries out the tasks of the working class. But if we do not have this standpoint the alternative seems problematic. We can only contend that the process of authentic proletarian revolution is very difficult and does not express definite historical tendencies within capitalism.

The Stalinists argue that the working class is large and influential in the West, and often organised into Communist Parties, and upholds a collectivist morality of solidarity and is conscious of its interests. The working class is also able to unite other oppressed classes like the peasantry under its leadership and develop a common struggle for socialism. Bu the question of success in the struggle depends on the development of the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist party: “The working class is the only class which, in addition to being capable of waging a consistent struggle against the oppression of capital, also has a realistic programme for reorganising society in keeping with the vital interests of all the toilers. Only the proletariat can build its political party that is armed with a scientific world outlook and is capable of bring mankind to this cherished goal.”(32) Thus the working class has sophisticated political capabilities, but their expression and realisation still depend on the importance of the Communist party. The assumption is that without this relationship of party to class the prospect of revolutionary change is unlikely. But what is not explained by the Stalinist authors is the precise character of the role of the working class within the revolutionary process. Instead this issue is subsumed into the acceptance by the workers of the leadership and programme of the party. This implies that social transformation is according to the dynamic impulses of the party, and the activity of the working class is reduced to supporting the instructions of the party. What is not accepted is that the revolutionary party should try to uphold and influence the militant actions of the workers. For example, the workers have organised Soviets, and so it is the task of the party to call for ‘All Power to the Soviets’. This perspective expresses how the aim of the party should be to encourage the development of the militancy of the class and so encourage its political development in terms of the conscious aim of revolutionary power. Hence the role of the party should be to promote the realisation of an authentic proletarian revolution. Instead of this understanding the question of success in the class struggle is reduced to the working class obeying the instructions of the party. The outcome of this relationship can only be bureaucratic, and so the importance of the strength of the working class is reduced to following the dictates of the select leadership. This is Blanquism and not Marxism.

The importance of proletarian internationalism and solidarity between the working class of all nations is also reduced to the acceptance of the leadership of Marxist-Leninist parties: “Whoever has mastered the Marxist doctrine and understands the historic mission of the proletariat that Marx discovered is bound to be an internationalist, to strive consciously for the unity and cooperation of the working people of all nations. That is why, as Marxism-Leninism wins in the working class movement of any country, the international ties of this movement with the working people of the other countries become greater.”(33) This comment could represent a formula that justifies the reduction of proletarian internationalism to an acceptance of the leadership of the most prestigious Marxist-Leninist party, the CPSU. The authors seem to be aware of this interpretation because they maintain that proletarian internationalism should not undermine the national independence of the various parties. But this contention is contradicted when internationalism is primarily defined in terms of the interests of the USSR and the fight of the socialist bloc against imperialist aggression. It is also interesting that internationalism is not defined in regards to the development of an international programme of class struggle. Instead of this recognition of the importance of international class struggle, the character of internationalism is defined almost exclusively in relation to the aims of existing socialism. This could suggest that internationalism is defined as the acceptance of the policy objectives of the USSR. Silence about the elaboration of a programme for the international class struggle also suggests that there is acceptance that the interests of the USSR could become in opposition to the development of the revolutionary process in the West. Instead of the elaboration of an approach with programmatic and strategic content about how to strive for socialism, the book only vaguely refers to the necessity of struggle for democracy, peace, and socialism. It is suggested that the role of the party is vital in order to warn the working class about the problems of reaction. But the details of a possible defence of bourgeois democracy in order to promote the struggle for socialism is not outlined. The formation of action committees is not mentioned. Therefore the standpoint is that of the reduction of political aims to moral platitudes which lack any concrete importance for the actual class struggle. Consequently, instead of outlining the difficulties involved in struggling against reaction and for socialism, or glossing over the complexities involved in the process of class conflict, the book makes a convenient leap into socialism.

It is assumed that socialism has been built because of the creative and constructive ability of the working class. But this claim is qualified by the additional point that successful socialism can only be built under the leadership of the Marxist-Leninist Party: “The working class can accomplish the great mission of emancipating all toilers only if it is imbued with revolutionary consciousness and Marx-Leninist ideology.” This latter comment is the most accurate ideological interpretation of the process of the creation of so-called socialism. The process of social transformation occurs under the strict supervision of the party, and so the reference to the importance of the role of the working class is effectively formal and an expression of an illusory concept of how socialism is developed. But these illusions do not disguise the more accurate descriptions of bureaucratic socialism. This section concludes with a description of the struggle between international socialism and reaction. The influence of reaction within capitalist society is not denied. For example, the authors consider that the role of reformism and the church is as reactionary as nationalism. This is a dogmatic view that denies the possibility for left-wing trends to develop within both reformism and religion. It is the obligation of a genuinely revolutionary party to be aware of developments within reformism and the Church in order to establish if it is possible dialogue with any potential anti-capitalist forces. However, these difficulties are not studied by the authors because they consider that the victory of socialism over reaction is likely: “History gives every ground for such optimism. However difficult the way to emancipation may be, it is a feasible way. Its feasibility lies in the growing power of the working class movement.”(35) This is a dogmatic perspective that is based on the political confidence generated by the expansion of the so-called socialist bloc. The actual difficulties of struggling for socialism in an era of boom are not seriously considered and instead the importance of the class struggle in the West is replaced by an emphasis on the advance of the socialist bloc. What is also not recognised is that in order to promote class struggle it is necessary to create a strategy that will facilitate the intensification of class struggle. Instead of this recognition, the book is based on the idealist conception that history will somehow resolve the outstanding questions of the class struggle. Thus what is being argued is that historical necessity will generate the prospect of socialism despite the influence of reaction. However, the complexity of events, has indicated that these types of conceptions are rigid and dogmatic. But the Stalinists are able to gloss over these uncomfortable questions because they consider that the October revolution was the beginning of the revolutionary process that will culminate in the victory of socialism. In this dogmatic manner they can underestimate the importance of set-backs in the class struggle, and instead suggest such events are a mere detour in the process of the realisation of socialism.

In other words the advance of the socialist bloc becomes considered to be the most important expression of the world revolutionary process. This means that the significance of the class struggle in the West becomes less important because the growth of the world socialist camp was what had become crucial for the prospect of victory over capitalism. Hence the question of problems with the progress of the class struggle in the West because of the strength of reformism and capitalism can be effectively denied because what is important is the historical role of the growth of the socialist camp. This standpoint also means that the world historical significance of the socialist camp has superseded the importance of the theory of socialism in one country. The Trotskyists never understood and analysed the importance of this standpoint. They continued to analyse the role and importance of the USSR in terms of the politics of isolation of the 1930’s. Thus they did not recognise that the USSR had acquired world historical ambitions in relation to the success of the world socialist camp. This was how class struggle became interpreted, and it meant the complexities of actual class struggle could be ignored. Instead the role of the USSR was conceived in terms of the ability to change world history in the direction of socialism.

Consequently, it is not surprising that the October revolution is portrayed in messianic terms: “In the beginning of the twentieth century the centre of the world revolutionary movement did actually shift from West to East. Russia was changing into a country destined to exert a decisive influence on the course of world history. It was precisely Russia that became the cradle of the proletarian revolution, the course of historical development advancing her working class to the forefront of the world socialist movement. Here the working class succeeded for the first time in putting an end to capitalism and thus in laying the basis for accomplishing the historic mission of the proletariat.”(36) There is no utilisation of Marxist arguments in favour of this standpoint. Instead we have the justification of the Slavophil view that the Russian people have a special destiny in the world. This viewpoint is then imposed onto Marxist historical materialism in terms of the view that the Russian proletarian revolution will culminate in world socialism. This subjective approach must be based on empty confidence that lacks recognition of the difficulties and problems that may undermine this dogmatic perspective. What is not recognised is that the initial isolation of the Soviet regime could distort the attempt to begin the construction of socialism. Hence the dependency of the Soviet regime on the advances of world revolution is not recognised. Instead it is assumed that the creation of the USSR will not only generate the internal construction of socialism, but also this development will be expressed in international terms. Hence, this idealist approach cannot admit that the USSR was nearly overthrown by German imperialist invasion in World War Two. Instead it was the special quality of the Russian people to be successful in this conflict and to then promote the international extension of socialism. Furthermore, this process, which has begun with the October revolution, will be eventually victorious in world terms. The beginnings of socialism in one country will culminate in world communism.

In contrast to this Slavophil standpoint a serious Marxist approach would suggest that there is no inherent centre of world revolution, but particular countries may acquire temporary strategic centrality in relation to the dynamics of international class struggle. What brings about the success of the revolutionary struggle is not the mystical qualities of any given nation but instead the ability of the working class to defeat the bourgeoisie. This possibility requires principled strategy rather than the false confidence produced by a messianic conception of history. In this context it is also important to recognise that successful revolution in national terms will not culminate in the victory of world revolution. Instead the dynamics of international class struggle are open-ended and many setbacks are possible. This is what actually happened after the October revolution, and defeats were more frequent than victories. But it was possible for the leadership of the CPSU to gloss over the seriousness of events with their justification of the complacent conception of history based on the inevitability of communism, via the inherent realisation of the messianic mission. In actuality, this historical idealism was utilised in order to deny the extent of the problems of the building of socialism in the USSR, and to reject the limitations created by isolation. But it was the tremendous victory of the USSR in World War Two which primarily contributed to the cultivation of the myths of the special qualities of the Russian people. This viewpoint enabled the expansion of the USSR to be portrayed as the advance of socialism. In actuality what occurred was a process of bureaucratic imperialism. (37)

However what this historical idealist standpoint expressed was the view that the doctrine of socialism in one country was not necessarily opposed to the expansion of so-called proletarian revolution. The very actions of the bureaucracy indicated that it was not necessarily opposed to the export of revolution under particular circumstances. It may still be true that the Stalinist bureaucracy was interested in accommodation with the forces of imperialism, and therefore opposed any manifestation of authentic proletarian revolution. But it had developed an approach that had superseded socialism in one country in importance, which was the historical idealism of slavophilism. This standpoint was utilised in order to justify the historical confidence that world communism was possible under the leadership of the USSR. On the basis of this ideology, the dominant role of the CPSU was also upheld. This messianic approach was also connected to the hero worship of Lenin. It was argued that Lenin was the unique interpreter of Marxism, and therefore enabled Russian Marxism to have a special historical mission: “Russia became the birth-place of the first new party of the Leninist type, which was destined to play a world-historic role.”(38) Lenin is considered to be the creator of the view that Russia is the centre of the world revolution, and that this approach is expressed by the view that socialism is possible in a single country. Thus in order to sustain this view it was necessary to discredit any suggestion that international class struggle would result in a simultaneous process of revolution. This was because the notion of simultaneous change would imply that there was not a centre of world revolution. It would reject the conception of a national special mission. Instead: “The Russian workers could not have roused the broad masses of the people to action against the autocracy and the oppression of capitalists and landlords if they had not, together with Lenin, and the Bolshevik Party, become convinced that they could fight for socialism and win by their own strength without waiting for other detachments of the international proletariat.”(39)

This is a distortion of the approach of Lenin. He actually upheld a dialectic that suggested the ability to build socialism in national terms was dependent on the success of international revolution. This is one reason why Lenin and the Bolsheviks were so aware of the importance of revolution in Germany. The very dispute over the Brest Litovsk treaty was about which tactic was more appropriate for defending the world revolution. Lenin argued that signing the peace treaty would not betray the world revolution because it was not possible to militarily defend the Soviet state. Thus revolutionary war would represent an adventure that would bring no gain either for the Soviet state or world revolution. It was the delay in the world revolution that narrowed the options of the Soviet state to that of sheer survival. Defence of the Soviet state, via an unacceptable peace treaty, was the only option until the world revolution started to develop. The point was that world revolution would not be advanced by an unrealistic military adventure, but instead: “Actually, however, the interests of world revolution demand that Soviet power, having overthrown the bourgeoisie in our country, should help that revolution, but that it should choose a form of help which is commensurate with its own strength.”(40) In other words there was nothing unique or necessary about the isolation of the Soviet regime. Instead the delay of world revolution only promoted the interests of counterrevolution, but the Soviet state should utilise the most cautious tactics, which were based on its fragile situation, in order to facilitate the process of world revolution. Despite differences, all were agreed that the central aim was the advance of world revolution, and so the isolation of the Soviet state was not helpful, and should be overcome as quickly as possible. Thus, there is no opposition to simultaneous revolution, indeed it would have been welcomed as an advance of the process of world revolution. Instead, the historical analysis of the Bolsheviks was based on the prospects of the international class struggle. Progress in this regard could only advance the interests of the isolated Soviet state. This approach was not formulated in terms of the messianic perspective of the special historical mission of the Russian people. Instead the discussions indicated that the perspective was that of world revolution and the prospect of socialism in one country was not discussed.

The Stalinist authors interpret the events of the October revolution as indicating the indispensability of the party. The actual involvement of the working class in the revolutionary process is minimised, and instead the emphasis is on the leading significance of the party: “The October revolution confirmed the Marxist truth that the most favourable revolutionary situation can end in victory only if there is a party capable of correctly appraising the situation, fully resolved to carry the struggle through to the end and able to lead the masses of the working people.”(41) The importance of the party is outlined in relation to uniting the struggle against imperialism and war, orientating the peasantry in terms of the democratic tasks of land reform, and facilitating the socialist movement of the working class. This process is defined as the party encouraging the mass struggle for power, but this is not outlined in detail. Thus there is no mention of the role of the Soviets, and the significance of mass popular democracy for the possibility of the overthrow of the bourgeois government is not outlined.

Instead the significance of the October revolution is considered in the messianic terms of creating a new Leninist stage of world revolution and the promotion of the struggle for national liberation: “The Great October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new era not only in the history of Russia but also in world history. It was a turning point in world history from the old, capitalist world to the new socialist world. Capitalism ceased to be a universal system ruling the world, the chain of world capitalism was broken never to be repaired.”(42) This claim can only have credibility if the future is projected onto the past in terms of idealist reasoning. In actuality, the isolated Soviet state was preoccupied with survival and was nearly overthrown by the forces of internal and external counterrevolution. This situation of isolation also undermined the genuine development of socialism and led to the bureaucratic distortions of the party-state regime. These problems can be denied if the revolution is glamorised and conceived in the most optimistic terms, and as an expression of the laws of world historical development. Consequently, isolation can be portrayed as the building of socialism in one country, which is in turn the specific expression of the future of humanity: “By demonstrating the possibility of the victory of socialism in one country, the October revolution was at the same time the first step towards the victory of socialism all over the world.”(43) Hence the October revolution is conceived as the ‘objective march of history’, and this is expressed by the international class struggle and the creation of the socialist bloc. (44) More sober reasoning recognises that the internal contradictions of the Soviet state made the prospect of socialism in one country problematical, and the limitations of Stalinism did not made the Soviet model attractive to many sections of the world working class. But it was the ultimate collapse of the Soviet bloc that empirically indicated that the view that the USSR represented the laws of history was essentially empty boasting. World capitalism had proved in practice to be more durable and dynamic than the supposed ‘socialism’ of the USSR. However, in a strange sense the very demise of the USSR indicated that the historical choice is between capitalism and socialism. This is because the very transitional and temporary character of the USSR was connected to the fact that it was not an expression of genuine socialism. But this point has to be understood very cautiously because the events of history indicate that there is not an inherent logic based on objective laws that tend in the direction of socialism. We have to struggle for socialism without any of these dogmatic assurances. History is ‘not on our side’, but nor is it on the ‘side’ of the bourgeoisie. Instead, actual concrete history is a collection of events that have no profound philosophical or historical significance in terms of establishing what will be the future. Rather only conscious practice can establish whether we are able to realise socialism. It is quite possible that failure will occur, but the prospect of failure should not mean that we become demoralised and therefore reject the struggle for socialism.

THE MARXIST LENINIST PARTY

The authors emphasise that only with the development of a Marxist-Leninist party is it possible to lead the working class to political power. These organisations represent the vanguard of the working class, or its most class conscious elements. The parties are organisationally based on democratic centralism, or the subordination of the minority to the majority, and the lower bodies accept the decisions of higher bodies. There is unity in action based on common participation in making the decisions of the party. But perpetual discussion based on the role of factions is not allowed and instead the party is based on the imperatives of centralised leadership. Consequently, even the official portrayal of the organisation of the party is an acceptance of the limited character of the involvement of the party rank and file in the making of decisions despite the danger of factionalism and the generation of dissent. (45) But, in actuality the party has historically been subordinated to the centralised dictates of the policies of the CPSU. This has meant subordination to Stalin or his successors. For example the CPGB accepted the Nazi-Soviet pact even though it obviously disagreed with this policy, and Harry Pollitt was dismissed from his post of General Secretary because of his refusal to accept what had happened. He was only reinstated when the Nazi invasion of the USSR occurred. The International Communist movement reluctantly accepted the Soviet repression of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 because of loyalty towards the CPSU. Only with the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 did the majority of the Communist Parties finally disagree with the actions of the CPSU. The development of Euro-Communism finally completed the process of the end of the strict unity of the international communist movement.

However, it could be argued that the Stalinist centralisation of the party organisation also influenced the development of Trotskyist parties which were also based on a version of democratic centralism. This often meant that open and public discussion of issues did not take place, and individual members were not allowed freedom of conscience. Hence the formation of factions did not promote the discussion of different viewpoints but instead created a tendency towards the fragmentation of organisations. It seemed that the party could only thrive with a leadership that had a monolithic and uncontested world view. For example, the most famous split that occurred within the Trotskyist movement was when the position of the SWP majority about the class character of the USSR was contested by the standpoint that it was imperialist and so suggested the official position of the degenerated workers state was problematical. (46) It could have been entirely possible to accommodate the two different factions without a split but the majority led by James Cannon could not tolerate an opposition. The very process of controversy and discussion was considered to be intolerable and the split was justified on the crude sociological grounds that the differences were between a proletarian majority and petty bourgeois minority. This view was nonsense, but it upheld a split of intolerance. The history of the Fourth International became one of splits between apparently monolithic and incompatible world views. It was not possible to develop an organisation with the acceptance of rival views, and the rational discussion of differences.

Thus the actual model of the Bolshevik party, which involved fierce discussion of differences, was not reproduced by either Stalinism or Trotskyism. Instead the CPSU after Lenin became an organisation that only tolerated the ideology of Bukharin-Stalin, and then was based on Stalin’s despotism after 1929, and the Trotskyist organisations were based on Trotsky’s individual prestige which defined policy; whilst after 1940 the various monolithic party regimes became common. Dissenters were soon expelled or forced out of the parties. Consequently, the Trotskyist organisations effectively inherited the Stalinist conception of democratic centralism. It was not recognised that in regimes of bourgeois democracy the process of freedom of discussion could not be repressed. Instead what was required was to combine a regime of toleration and open discussion with the demands of cohesion and unity of action. What was not recognised was that a genuine democratic regime could encourage the realisation of united practice. Instead splits were frequent, and the formation of rival internationals became a constant feature of the political activity of Trotskyism. The actual necessity of single organisation to represent Trotskyism against Stalinism was not recognised. This development would have enhanced the prestige and authority of Trotskyism. Instead it was unable to establish a voice of authority, and as a result was marginalised because of its fragmenting tendencies.

The various Communist Parties could claim greater legitimacy to represent the working class than the Trotskyist organisations because they were larger and had closer connections with the trade unions, and carried out constant and regular work among the working class. As a result the party is in a position to learn from the masses: “The party can lead the masses and teach them only if it itself learns from the masses, i.e., carefully studies all that arises out of the people’s practical activity, and assimilates the wisdom of the people.”(47) Only if the party continually obtains support for its policies within the working class can it claim to be a popular party. The assumption is that with these close connections between party and class the opportunity for revolution ultimately becomes possible. However there is a discrepancy between theory and practice. The generation of the popular connections between party and class do not necessarily advance the Stalinist conception of revolution. What is crucial is the particular interests of the CPSU. Thus Stalin acted to undermine the Greek revolution despite its popular base because of the diplomatic interests of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, Khrushchev encouraged the Cuban revolution because it was geo-politically useful in the sphere of USA imperialism. In this context the popular legitimacy of revolution is secondary, and the mass support of the Communist Party is subordinated to the aims of the CPSU.

The Stalinists contend that the role of strategy is about establishing the major tasks of the revolution, and to promote the generation of the most effective alliance of class forces that can realise these aims. The implication is that the strategy outlined by the Bolsheviks was vital for the success of the October revolution. This is correct, but what is ignored is that the very effectiveness of the Bolsheviks was its ability to recognise how the working class could realise revolutionary aspirations, via ‘All Power to the Soviets’. Revolution was not a strategy passively accepted by the working class, but instead the strategy was a guideline which inspired the creative action of the working class. Hence the revolutionary process is more than the party leading the working class to victory, it is rather about how the party inspired the class to utilise its own creative initiative. This point can never be properly accepted by the Stalinists because authentic proletarian revolution undermines their elitist claims to effective supremacy over the working class. Thus whilst it is accepted that practical struggle is important, and so are close connections of party and class, the ultimate relationship is that of the leadership of the party and the acceptance of this situation by the class: “Hence the art of political leadership consists in using means and methods which, by being derived from the experience of the masses and the level of their class consciousness, can advance the masses in the struggle for their final aims. The Party cannot wait passively until reality itself will have taught the masses. It must be able to help them to arrive at the proper conclusions.”(48) There is no question that the party should learn from the working class, instead it is always assumed that the process of learning is as a result of the guidance of the party. For example, Lenin effectively instructed the working class in 1917 to oppose imperialist war. The fact that this had already become unpopular is not mentioned in the analysis.

It is also argued that Communism is opposed to revisionism that attempts to reconcile the working class with capitalism, and sectarianism that justifies adventurism. This viewpoint is an attempt to maintain the hegemonic role of the CPSU against the rivalry of Yugoslavia on the one hand, and China and Albania on the other. The principles of proletarian internationalism are not considered to be at the expense of the ability to establish the national independence of parties. Yet it is also complacently indicated that the meeting of the Communist parties in Moscow in 1957 arrived at unanimous decisions! This situation would imply that the monolithic character of the decision making process suggests that the actual independence of Communist parties is very limited. Indeed if a party votes against the views of the CPSU it is likely to be castigated as sectarian or revisionist. This prospect of isolation creates a constant tendency for monolithic unity. It would seem that the Trotskyist internationals would have a political history that rejected this tendency towards national domination. But this is not what occurred. Instead we have had instances of American hegemony, French or British domination, and Latin American centred organisations. This development has gone alongside the creation of individual leaderships and the lack of democratic discussion. Hence it is not possible to reject the domination of the CPSU in principled terms because this development is being reproduced in micro terms. Only the majority led by Mandel seemed to have avoided this situation of extreme centralisation but this was because of the intellectual prestige of Mandel himself. This organisation was constantly characterised by tension between Mandel and various national sections. The ability for Trotskyism to develop an International that was more democratic than the movement led by the CPSU was seriously undermined.

Under the leadership of Khrushchev, the world communist movement attempts to establish unity with the forces of the most left wing forms of Social Democracy. This objective is in order to advance the aims of peace and democracy and enhance the struggle to improve the material conditions of the working class. It is argued that unity in action can be developed in order to advance the struggle for socialism. The opponents of this perspective utilise the ideology of anti-communism, but this can only be to the benefit of monopoly capital. The historic differences between Communism and Social Democracy over the revolutionary process should not undermine unity in terms of aiming to realise a socialist society based on the nationalisation of the economy: “And the greater the unity in the working class movement, the greater the chances in a number of countries for the peaceful transition to socialism.”(49) The logic of the argument seems to be immaculate. It is argued that the Communist Parties and the most radical forms of Social democracy have a united aim in socialism, even if they historically disagree about the role of revolution. However, their unity will enable them to attempt to realise electoral victory, and in this manner promote the peaceful transition to socialism. The Communists and Social Democrats disagree over the latter’s views that socialism can be introduced via a succession of reforms. But they can unite around a programme of reforms that nationalise important monopolies, and improve the interests of the working class, whilst also advancing the progress of peace and democracy. This democratic programme, in order to advance the process of transition to socialism, will involve organisationally concessions and compromise. But the aim of this united front is to create the leading role of the Communist Party in the process of change: “In short, the leading influence of a working class party is the result of its own political activity and not of any pressure or dictation. When the party pursues a correct policy, when the entire people heeds its voice and its prestige rapidly increases, the other political parties and groups recognise its leading influence themselves and give it a decisive voice in elaborating the policy of the united front.”(50)

It is this latter conclusion that implies the Communist party is not sincere about genuine unity in action. This is because the only outcome that is palatable to the Stalinist authors is one that is based on the domination of the Communist Party in the process of transition to socialism. The fact that reference is made to the experience of Eastern Europe is not reassuring because this was based on the forced fusion of Communist and Social Democratic organisations to the advantage of the former. The parties of Social Democracy were effectively repressed. It is suggested that the leading role of the Marxist party is not imposed by dictation or command, and is only interested in the methods of persuasion, but why is this supposed assurance about the conduct of the Communist Party combined with an insistence on its leading role in the political process of change? Hence it is not surprising that the Communist Party insists on the right to criticise the vacillations of its Social Democratic partners, and also insists on its supremacy and hegemony. The implication is that Social Democracy will ultimately become opportunist and so should be reduced in importance in the democratic bloc. Ultimately the only principled force for change is the Communist Party: “But when the united front had become organised, right-wing opportunism may become special danger because it completely capitulates to the demands of bourgeois allies, weakens the independent position of the revolutionary party of the working class and slips into the position of bourgeois nationalism.”(51)

This standpoint seems to be a recipe for single party rule. The conception of the united front is conceived as effectively being of a temporary character and its effectiveness is based on the establishment of the strict domination of the Communist Party. It is envisaged that at some point in the revolutionary process there will be an inevitable split between the Marxist-Leninists and Social Democracy, and the very requirements of the class struggle will determine the necessity of political struggle with what has become an opportunist force. In this sense there is not a departure from the experience of the formation of the People’s Democracies in Eastern Europe, but instead there is envisaged a process of repetition. What is remarkable is that the book is completely explicit that the aim is the formation of single party rule. No conception of multi-party democracy based on the role of the united front is envisaged. Instead all the allies of the Communist Party are comprehended as being unreliable and so should at a given moment in time the united front should be ended and the realisation of single party rule should be inaugurated. However, this frank admission of the objectives of the Communist Party raise questions about the very possibility to develop viable united fronts. Thus it is not surprising that the most productive period of the united front was caused when the period of Euro-Communism was occurring. The commitment of the Euro-Communist parties to bourgeois democracy meant they were no longer in support of single party rule. Ironically, it was Social Democracy, as in France, which gained the most from these united fronts. The Communist Party was no longer in a position in which it could impose its hegemony. Instead the creation of what could be considered genuine united fronts could only be to the benefit of Social Democracy. Also the working class would never have contemplated the introduction of a single party rule. This development had only been made possible because of the Red Army occupation of Eastern Europe. In contrast, the importance of bourgeois democracy meant that the question of socialism had to be conceived in relation to the role of genuine discussion and the formation of feasible united front governments. The reformism of Euro-Communism meant an end to the Stalinist aim of single party rule. Ironically, this objective became justified by some forces within Trotskyism despite Mandel’s support for socialist democracy.

What was being challenged was the continued validity of the perspective of the dictatorship of the proletariat given the importance of liberal democracy. The very aim of single party rule had been discredited by the experience of Stalinism, but the dilemma was that the legitimate alternative seemed to be expressed by the political institutions of capitalism. Only the revival of Soviet democracy could express a principled attempt to overcome this impasse. This Marxist alternative was most convincingly outlined by Meszaros. (52) But even this attempt was flawed by its failure to tackle the issue of the validity of multi-party democracy. The point was that Soviets plus single party rule had been shown by historical experience to have been unprincipled and the basis of the beginning of Stalin’s despotism. Only a conception of multi-party democracy could overcome this dilemma despite the problem of the relationship of this political system to capitalism. In contrast, the Stalinists were open advocates of one party rule. It was this standpoint, alongside economic limitations, which ultimately resulted in the demise of the USSR.

THE PEASANTRY AND NATIONAL LIBERATION

The Stalinists argue that the liberation of the peasantry is represented by the end of the various forms of exploitation that occur under capitalism through the establishment of socialism. It is argued that voluntary collectivisation occurred in the USSR which enabled agriculture to be modernised and the exploitation of the kulaks to be ended. What is not mentioned is that this process occurred as a result of mass coercion. The majority of middle peasants did not want to be deprived of their private plots, and so they were generally sympathetic to the plight of the kulaks. Hence collectivisation could only be introduced by the methods of state coercion. However, this was the issue that undermined the Left Opposition because it was mistakenly believed that the government was attempting a progressive measure, although with bureaucratic distortions. Furthermore, the Left Opposition rejected any prospect of alliance with the Right Opposition because it was considered to be a force for the restoration of capitalism. Thus the limitations of the Left Opposition meant that it could not oppose the repressive actions of the government in principled and intransigent terms. The Left Opposition never recognised that what was happening was an expression of the creation of a new ruling class based on a system of exploitation.

The Stalinist authors outline how capitalism has led to imperialism and the national oppression of colonies. This means the aspiration for national freedom is progressive, and the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nation can be progressive and represent anti-imperialist aspirations. It is claimed that the expansion of the socialist camp in the post-war period has led to the weakening of imperialism and led to the disintegration of the colonial empires. The working class is considered to be the most intransigent and principled opposition to imperialism. But it is necessary to unite with the peasantry in order to develop a mass and popular character to the struggle against imperialism. The national bourgeoisie is inconsistent. There is a comprador element that is dependent on the economies of the imperialist countries and so is opposed to the struggle for national liberation, but there is also a strata that supports the independent industrialisation of the country and so is generally in favour of national emancipation. The Stalinists favour the formation of a united democratic struggle of all the diverse social forces against imperialism: “At the same time an analysis of the present balance of forces in the colonies demonstrates the existence there of conditions favourable to the organisation of a united national patriotic struggle of liberation against the imperialists. The basis for this unity is to be found in the common interest of the broadest social strata in economic and cultural progress, in emancipation from colonial slavery, in putting an end to plunder by foreign monopolies and to national humiliation.”(53)

This perspective is directly opposed to the Trotskyist conception of permanent revolution. This upheld the view that the tasks of genuine national emancipation could only occur under the leadership of the working class. This did not mean the rejection of the democratic programme, but rather the combination of this programme with more socialist demands like the formation of Soviets: “Then, at a certain stage in the mobilization of the masses under the slogans of revolutionary democracy, soviets can and should arise……Sooner or later, the soviets should overthrow bourgeois democracy. Only they are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution.”(54) The view of Trotsky is that the national bourgeoisie will ultimately betray the anti-imperialist struggle because of its mistrust of the working class. This happened in China in the mid 1920’s. In general his standpoint does have validity, but increasingly does not explain the process of national liberation that occurred in the 1950’s under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie, or intelligentsia. The differences between the theory and the practice were explained by Tony Cliff in his conception of ‘deflected permanent revolution’.(55) However, regardless of the necessary modifications to the theory of permanent revolution it was still essentially valid to contend that the primary task of genuine national emancipation from imperialist domination could only occur under working class leadership. Only the prospect of socialism would represent the effectively end of dependency on imperialism.

Instead of accepting this argument, the Stalinist view is quite complex. They divide the post-colonial countries into those that have joined the socialist camp, the capitalist countries that have an independent foreign policy, and those that have become part of the pro-imperialist bloc. It is argued that some countries like India, Indonesia and Egypt have carried out state capitalist type nationalisation which indicates the prospect of independent industrialisation. This process could begin the advance towards socialism, but it could also result in regression and the formation of state monopoly capitalism. Hence the task of the local Communist party is to struggle for democracy and the creation of the political conditions that will facilitate the potential for socialism. The task in Latin America is to create unity in the struggle against the domination of US imperialism and this requires the creation of an anti-imperialist democratic front involving both the working class and the national bourgeoisie. It is also admitted that this task is complex and may be undermined by the pro-Americanism of the most reactionary sections of the national bourgeoisie. Furthermore, it is necessary to oppose anti-communism which may undermine the unity of the anti-imperialist forces, and it is vital to oppose the influence of the USA which is the bulwark of world imperialism. The socialist camp is a vital ally to the countries struggling to achieve national independence.

In other words the strategy of the CPSU is stageist. First the attainment of the anti-colonial and democratic revolution, and then distinct advance toward socialism. Limited success has been achieved in this regard with the establishment of state capitalist regimes that are able to uphold independent economic development. The era of colonial revolution seems to have vindicated the approach of the CPSU. However, this approach has also effectively resulted in the rejection of any support for proletarian revolution because this could result in the end of anti-imperialist unity. Hence the strategy of the CPSU is based on the interests of the national bourgeoisie. This approach seemed to be working because several former colonies became pro-Soviet and opposed to American imperialism. But in the longer term this strategy could not provide a progressive historical alternative to American hegemony of the Third World. This situation was reinforced by the advent of globalisation in the 1980’s which meant the creation of a unified world economy based on the interests of capital accumulation. This situation indicated in material practice that the only alternative was the perspective of Trotsky’s permanent revolution. Only under the leadership of the working class could all forms of imperialist domination be ended. The alternative was to accept globalisation on the terms of world capitalism. The standpoint of national democratic revolution under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie was shown to be an illusion. However, in the 1950’s this seemed to be a credible theory and principled perspective. At this time it was Trotsky who seemed to be dogmatic. But national economic development did not result in independence from world imperialism, and instead the subordination of the national bourgeoisie to the imperatives of the world economy was the major feature of colonial liberation. The economic support of the Soviet Union could not undermine this situation and increasingly many pro-Soviet countries returned to the pro-American camp. The politics of anti-imperialism, which were supported by the Soviet Union, were shown to be increasingly undermined by the dynamics of the world economy. Only in a few South-East Asian countries was genuine state capitalism realised and developed. This situation was personified by the increasing integration of China into the world economy. However, the Chinese economy is described, it is based on the imperatives of capital accumulation and a close relationship with America. In contrast, the USSR has collapsed and Eastern Europe is part of the capitalist world economy. Trotsky’ approach has been completely vindicated by the decline of the promise of the colonial revolution. Events showed that only genuine proletarian revolution could bring about emancipation from the domination of imperialism. But this approach would never be adopted by the CPSU because of its association with Trotsky.

It is argued by the Stalinist authors that the economic domination of the capitalist world economy by the USA enables it to undermine the national sovereignty of the other developed capitalist countries like the United Kingdom. These countries make profits from the war industries and become part of an alliance against the USSR based on the hegemony of the USA. The domination of the USA enables it to ensure its ability to influence the activity of the world economy in its interests. The military expression of this domination is the establishment of NATO. The export of capital, and the tendencies of the USA monopolies to extent operations into Europe reinforces the situation of hegemony. The claim that this undermining of national sovereignty is necessary as part of the defence of the ‘free world’ against communism is false. The major problem for the independence of nations is the increasing tendency of the monopolies to exercise control over the world economy. This standpoint is one-sided. The uneven character of economic and political power does not reduce the ability of the Western capitalist states to exercise independent national power. They are not subordinated and oppressed nations, but instead still retain important influence within the world economy. This point is admitted by the Stalinist authors but it undermines their argument which seems to suggest that countries like the UK have become dependencies of the USA. Instead it is necessary to admit that the UK, USA and France had a common interest in opposing the influence of the USSR and its allies, and they were also united in ensuring that colonial revolution does not benefit the USSR. In other words, it is accepted that the USA has a leading role in the world economy in terms of the benefit of capitalism in general. This standpoint is dismissed by the Stalinists as an expression of the false ideology of cosmopolitanism. In fact this ideology possibly accurately expresses the unity of the major countries of capitalism against the USSR.

What is most problematical about the viewpoint of the Stalinists is that it is being suggested that the working class of the advanced imperialist countries should defend the values of patriotism and the values of national independence from the cosmopolitan ideology of the ruling class. It is argued that only the realisation of socialism can bring about genuine national freedom, and patriotism does not mean support for imperialist wars, but the perspective is the struggle for national freedom: “Preservation of state sovereignty and realisation of an independent foreign policy are demands that form part of the programme of the communist movements in France, Italy and other countries.”(56) This approach represents an accommodation to the interests of the national bourgeoisie. It is being argued that the standpoint of the Communist Parties should be diluted to accommodate the interests of the national bourgeoisie that are being undermined by the economic activity of USA imperialism. It is possible to construct a broad alliance from sections of the national bourgeoisie to the working class against US imperialism. This approach could be very opportunist and result in an emphasis on the role of nation at the expense of the development of international class struggle. The requirements of this opportunist alliance is likely to result in the rejection of militant anti-imperialism in the name of the unity of the alliance and instead express an accommodation to national chauvinism. This type of development was expressed by the various Communist Parties opposition to membership of the Common Market in the name of the interests of the nation. An internationalist and principled approach was obscured because of the concessions being made to nationalism

DEMOCRACY AND PEACE

The Stalinist authors argue that democracy is crucial to the struggle for socialism. But the interests of democracy are being undermined in the post-war period by the onset of state monopoly capitalism and the role of American imperialism. The ideology of anti-Communism is utilised as a pretext to undermine the importance of democratic rights. The working class, and the Communist Parties, have to be in the vanguard of the struggle to uphold democracy and relate it to the perspective for socialism. However, the problem with this standpoint is that it cannot be taken seriously because the historical experience of Stalinism has been about the defence of single party rule, and this development has often been consolidated by extreme forms of terror and repression. The 1936 constitution of the USSR promised a whole array of democratic freedoms, but they were merely fictional because of the reality of the domination of a single party. Hence the Communist Parties can only become principled defenders of democracy if they promise that the ‘socialist’ system will become seriously modified and allow for the creation of a multi-party situation. Only dissent, and the organisation of valid opposition parties, will mean that democracy is no longer a fiction. In this sense, it will be possible to argue in favour of democracy under capitalism without being accused of hypocrisy. However, this process never occurred until the 1980’s because the Stalinist system was general not amenable to reform. Consequently the question of a democratic bloc of progressive forces in the West was a non-starter because of the oppressive situation in the East.

But the Trotskyists were not able to benefit from this situation because their viewpoint was ambiguous. They were in favour of genuine Soviet parties, which did express opposition to a single party state. But this approach implied that the various parties would have a similar standpoint, and so the actuality of monolithic party rule would be continued in new forms. Only the commitment to the formation of oppositional bourgeois parties would enable the development of a genuine multi-party system. This commitment was ambiguously made by Mandel in the 1970’s. But it was never made resolutely because of the fear of the prospect of the restoration of capitalism. What was not recognised is that if an authentic socialist society is being constructed the political impulses for the restoration of capitalism will not make progress. The forces in favour of capitalism will not acquire popular support. But society can only be a genuine multi-party democracy if the parties supporting capitalism are allowed to function. This is the political truth understood by Kautsky and Luxemburg. But Trotskyism never rejected the conception of the political rule of the revolutionary party. Hence, only in partial terms was the approach of Stalinism rejected.

The question of peace in the modern era is outlined in terms of ending the cold war. The role of the cold war for USA imperialism was the construction of a broad alliance against the USSR. The situation is one of instability which could result in armed conflict: “Artificially created and maintained international tension, rejection of international co-operation on a basis of equality, and proclamation of methods of dictation to and pressure on the socialist countries (the policy from “positions of strength”) constitute the core of the “cold war”.(57) The utilisation of the threat of the communist menace is important for subordinating countries to the American camp, and promotes membership of NATO. This description of the cold war is roughly accurate, and indicates the policy of containment utilised by the USA against the USSR. But what is ignored is how the Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe, such as the effective denial of democracy to Poland, contributed to the cold war. Stalin accepted that his despotic methods contributed to the development of the cold war and the end of co-operation between the Allies of the USA, UK and USSR. However, possibly the major contributory factor leading to cold war was the contradiction between the American aim of open markets and the Soviet fear of being subordinated to the influence of the USA. The contradictions between ‘bureaucratic socialism’ and world capitalism explain how the cooperation of the war period could not be continued.

The Stalinists argued correctly that despite the cold war, world war was not inevitable. The economic character of capitalism creates the tendency for wars, but world war in the past was generated either by the opportunist limitations of the Second International or the aggression of fascism. But: “The situation is different now that the socialist camp has come into being and has grown into a peaceful force on the world arena. Now the peace loving forces can rely on the indestructible bulwark of peace formed by the socialist countries. Moreover, a large group of states have freed themselves from colonial dependence and are actively opposing a new war. The working class movement in the capitalist countries has grown and become steeled to an incomparably greater degree. The movement of the supporters of peace has acquired an unprecedented scope.”(58) This standpoint was actually more realistic and sober than the view of the Trotskyists, who had difficulty coming to terms with the end of World War Two. James Cannon argued that the war had not ended, and then the Pablo led majority of the Fourth International adopted a catastrophic conception of war revolution.(59) This voluntarist understanding did not recognise that the expansion of the USSR did mean the creation of a situation of stalemate that undermined the prospect of a new world war. It was also possible to end the threat of nuclear war in the early 1960’s by direct negotiations between the leaders of the USA and the USSR.

However, the claims made by the Stalinists that they do not benefit by the cold war is illusory. The USSR has obviously benefitted by the formation of the Soviet empire which has contributed to the development of the cold war. It has also gained by the creation of the arms economy. Hence the claim to be the innocent victim of the cold war is false: “In the Soviet Union, as in the other socialist countries, there are no social classes which could profit by war. On its vast territory the Soviet Union has everything necessary for the development of its economy. It does not need additional territory, new sources of raw materials, new foreign markets, capital investment spheres or colonies. Planned socialist production does not suffer over-production crises and therefore does not need such stimuli as militarisation and the arms race.”(60) This expression of altruism is contradicted by Soviet demands for reparations in the immediate aftermath of World War Two and its behaviour in Eastern Europe. Hence the Soviet leadership was prepared for cold war if it was based on upholding the domination of the new Empire, and its connected economic exploitation. But the Soviet leadership did not advocate nuclear war because it would mean the effective end to the gains of economy, culture and civilisation in the USSR. It is for this reason that they were serious about the aim of peace and ensuring that nuclear war did not occur. (Khrushchev was removed as leader because of his adventurism in relation to Cuba in 1964.) Therefore the CPSU upheld peaceful co-existence as the basis of relations between countries of different social systems and that peaceful competition should determine whether capitalism or socialism becomes superior. The alternative of nuclear war cannot advance socialism, and instead socialism can be victorious in relation to the outcome of peaceful co-existence.

Trotskyism has generally opposed peaceful co-existence and argued that it can only result in accommodation between the forces of capitalism and communism. This is a dogmatic and antiquated standpoint. In a situation which represents the danger of nuclear war the option of peaceful co-existence is the only realistic and credible policy. It does not mean the undermining of world revolution and instead indicates the reactionary and aggressive character of imperialism. Hence the USSR acts against the interests of world revolution because it is bureaucratic and anti-socialist and not as a result of the application of peaceful co-existence. Indeed, the USSR is quite capable of undermining the aims of peaceful co-existence as with its aggressive invasion of Hungary in 1956. However, most of the time it is the USA and its allies who undermined peaceful co-existence, as with the invasions of Korea and Vietnam, and threats against Cuba. The development of détente actually led to the ability of the USSR to expand its worldwide influence, and was a practical expression of the benefits of peaceful co-existence. Consequently, if a genuine socialist society developed it would still have to practice peaceful co-existence in the continuing nuclear age. However, this would not be to the detriment of world revolution, and this aim could be pursed without resulting in the advent of nuclear war.

STRATEGY

The argument is presented that the perspective that is still valid consists of proletarian revolution, and the continued intensification of the class struggle in the West indicates this possibility. But this perspective is modified by the conception of a democratic movement, or stage: “Although these movements do not pursue socialist aims, they are objectively connected with the struggle of the working class for socialism and under certain conditions may merge with it in a single stream that will sweep away the power of capitalism. These movements offer new possibilities for unity of action of the working class with all the other working people and other sections of the population opposed to the yoke of the monopoly bourgeoisie.”(61) This strategy has serious limitations. It means that the primary aim of socialism is diluted and compromised by the conception of a democratic stage. Emphasis on the latter was at the expense of the former in the Spanish revolution of the mid 1930’s and led to the Stalinists acting to supress any movement in favour of genuine proletarian revolution. The point is that even in the underdeveloped countries a principled understanding of the democratic revolution cannot be considered to be a distinct stage that is prior to socialism, and is instead an integral part of the socialist revolution. Hence land reform cannot become completely realised unless it is an aspect of the struggle for proletarian revolution. It was the opportunist Social Democrats who differentiated between the minimum stage of democracy from the maximum and distant stage of socialism. The result was neither the principled realisation of democracy, and there was a lack of advance towards socialism. However, the Stalinists would argue that this is not their intention. Instead the democratic stage is a prelude to socialism. They would suggest that mobilisation for the democratic revolution is the basis of the creation of a mass movement for socialism. But this is an illusion, the tasks are intertwined. For example, the aspiration for proletarian revolution creates the organs of Soviet democracy. Thus any democratic demands become a dynamic part of the class struggle in favour of socialism. In contrast, the attempt to differentiate between the democratic stage and the proletarian revolution becomes an undermining of the dynamics of class struggle. The indifference of the Stalinists towards this problem indicates that they are wary of the success of genuine proletarian revolution in the West.

It is interesting that the sociological conception of the democratic stage involves the aspiration for national sovereignty in the West combined with limited nationalisation of the monopolies. But the former demand is actually reactionary and undermines the development of genuine proletarian internationalism. Whist the latter aim could be compatible with the reform of the economy, and so represent the modification of capitalism rather than actual movement towards socialism. But it is argued that these types of demands are not bourgeois democratic. Instead what is called for is a ‘democracy of a new type, a democracy that reflects the interests of the broad masses of the working people and the other progressive sections of the population.”(62) The view being presented is that the democracy that is being advocated is not bourgeois democratic but neither is it strictly proletarian democratic. The model is that of the Popular Frontist struggle against fascism, and in the post-war period it is opposition to state monopoly capital that may bring about democratic revolution: “These revolutions would be anti-monopoly revolutions, since they would be aimed at overthrowing the dictatorship of the biggest monopolies. The working class, peasantry, middle strata of the urban intelligentsia would be the driving forces. In other words what could occur would be a people’s democratic revolution, with the participation of the broadest sections of the population.”(63)

What is not explained is why a revolutionary struggle directed against the economic power of the monopolies would not attempt completion in terms of realisation of the aim of socialism. Why is it not possible to connect the opposition to the monopolies with the recognition that the perspective of proletarian revolution has become feasible and credible? Indeed, the Stalinists concede to the validity of this argument because they suggest that what is occurring is a particular expression of the bourgeois democratic revolution under the leadership of the working class which is a prelude to the socialist revolution. Indeed it is conceded that the present conditions make this perspective more favourable. Even in the time of Lenin it was programmatically outlined how the bourgeois democratic revolution could become transformed into the proletarian revolution. This was because the world capitalist system had matured for socialism, and the struggle against feudalism could become opposition to imperialism and the basis of mass struggle against capitalism. The working class had become the decisive revolutionary force and could lead the bourgeois democratic revolution which would become a socialist revolution. The application of this theory in the post-war period led the anti-fascist popular-democratic revolution to become an expression of the overthrow of capitalism. Hence the democratic revolution based on opposition to monopolies could become an integral part of a revolutionary process that leads to socialism: “In other words, the democratic revolution is now essentially directed against the same enemy as is the socialist revolution of the working class. This means the two types of revolution have drawn still closer. Under these conditions the struggle for the solution of the democratic and socialist tasks may not take the form of two separate revolutions but will merely constitute two stages of a single revolutionary process.”(64)

The formation of the People’s Democracies in Eastern Europe was based on the united struggle against Fascism that united most of the nation, apart from the most reactionary elements. This led to an end to the domination of imperialism and the implementation of land reform, and as a result of these measures the socialist tasks like nationalisation could begin immediately. The revolution was an uninterrupted process of the unity of the democratic and the socialist tasks. Opposition of the national bourgeoisie and right-wing Social Democracy did not undermine the realisation of this revolutionary process. The democratic revolution in the West could have the same trajectory. The establishment of a regime that was opposed to the economic power of the monopolies could carry out extensive nationalisation that would end their domination, and this possibility would be enhanced by the role of a powerful working class and Marxist-Leninist party: “However, close the democratic and socialist stages may draw, the transition from one stage to another cannot come about without a conscious leadership, without the active participation of the Marxist-Leninist party.”(65)

It is interesting that the conception of the unity of the democratic and socialist revolution is still an expression of the party revolution. What is the crucial and dynamic expression of the various stages and progress of the revolutionary process is the importance of the dynamism of the party. The actual involvement of the working class is not outlined and instead it is assumed that the workers follow the instructions of the party. Thus the model for revolution is the events in Eastern Europe, when developments were under the strict control of the party. But what is ignored by this analysis is that the significance of the domination of Eastern Europe by the USSR. It was the polarised conditions of the cold war that primarily decided the Stalinist bureaucracy to act to overthrow capitalism by bureaucratic means. The involvement of the working class was kept to the minimum. In these terms, the USSR initially limited developments to a democratic stage that was still based on the importance of private economic activity. The Stalinists controlled the state, but still co-existed with capitalism. Only after the cold war intensified did the process of political control become transformed into nationalisation of the economy. The stageist character of the process of change was determined by the role of the USSR. (66) In a process of authentic proletarian revolution, the democratic and socialist aspects of the revolution are likely to be combined. The working class will establish democratic organs that will enable the socialist tasks of the revolution to be realised. The Stalinists are aware of these dynamics of genuine proletarian revolution because they carefully ask whether a distinct democratic stage of revolution could undermine the struggle for socialism. But their answer is based on the utilisation of Eastern Europe as a role model of revolution: “In actual fact, the struggle for general democratic aims does not weaken, but on the contrary, strengthens the position of the working people in the struggle for socialism. It strengthens them primarily because the victories won by the working people in the struggle for democracy, peace, etc., create more favourable conditions for the struggle for socialism.”(67)

 This comment could be true if there is a genuine dynamics that connects democratic aspirations with the aim of socialism. Such a connection was present in the 1917 Russian revolution and in events in Spain between 1936-39. But, historically, the very importance of Stalinism was to limit the development of the class struggle in the West to a democratic stage in the interests of the CPSU, and to undermine the development of genuine proletarian revolution. The authors are aware of this history and so emphatically reject any notion that the aim of democratic revolution has undermined the struggle for socialism. Instead they try to outline how the democratic revolution will undermine the influence of the monopolies and so establish an important advance towards socialism. The working class also makes valuable lessons needed for the ultimate struggle against capitalism. It is also possible to link the democratic stage with popular causes like peace and opposition to imperialism. Democratic demands like peace and land reform were a vital part of the October revolution. However, the point is that apart from 1917, this type of principled democratic revolution is mythical. Instead the slogan of democracy has become an expression of what becomes considered to be the alternative to socialism. This situation could have occurred in post-war Eastern Europe if the cold war had not intervened. Effectively the Stalinists in the West have concentrated on the democratic revolution and neglected the socialist revolution. Consequently, the following comment is part myth, and part truth: “At the same time the Marxist-Leninist approach to the general democratic movements requires complete clarity as to the class position. However, important any particular movement may be, every Communist and every class conscious worker always keeps in view the final aims of the working class movement. But this does not make him a less conscious and selfless fighter for the immediate interests of the mass of the people and for such demands of theirs as peace, democracy, national independence and sovereignty.”(68)

Under the influence of the CPSU, the various Communist parties became skilful exponents of the aims of peace and other democratic issues, but this approach was not connected to the strategy of proletarian revolution. It was the very distinctiveness of the democratic and socialist stages of the revolutionary process that was emphasised and therefore there unity was considered to be an expression of Trotskyism. This book is obviously trying to rectify these limitations and to emphasise the unity of the democratic and socialist revolution. It is trying to correct what they consider to be the reformist limitations of the various Western Communist parties. But the problem is that the very diplomatic requirements of the USSR will generate pressures to continue to treat the democratic and socialist revolutions in separate terms. This is what happened in 1968 when the French Communist Party rejected the militant tactic of the continuation of the general strike because of the support of the USSR for De Gaulle. In theory the CPSU could justify the combination of the democratic and socialist revolution, but in practice it justified their distinctiveness and connected rationale for the reformism of the Western Communist parties. Only Trotskyism was an able exponent of the unity of the democratic and socialist revolution. But this standpoint was sometimes flawed by the neglect of the importance of the democratic programme for the Western capitalist countries. However, the Trotskyists did become principled advocates of peace and nuclear disarmament despite being against peaceful co-existence, and in practice they considered the defence of civil liberties very seriously. In theory the question of the democratic revolution in the West was dismissed as Stalinist opportunism, but in practice the concrete aspects of the democratic revolution was recognised in serious terms. But the Trotskyists were correct to question the attachment of Stalinism to the perspective of proletarian revolution. The theory of Stalinism had formal revolutionary aspects, but its practice was opportunist. The lectures of the CPSU did not correct this opportunism because ultimately it was the cause of this reformism.

It is still necessary to outline what could constitute a principled programme that was based on the unity of democratic and socialist tasks. The initial aspect of this development would be the creation of a mass movement that was based on demands that undermined capitalism and so promoted the possibility of socialism. But the most important aspect of this movement would be the development of Soviets, or organs of popular democracy that challenged the limitations of bourgeois democracy. This would represent a rival form of mass power that could smash the bourgeois state. The success of the potential of the Soviets would be to form a workers government. This would begin the process of combining the democratic and socialist tasks of the revolutionary process such as abolishing the House of Lords and the monarchy in the UK, and installing annual parliaments with elected delegates subject to recall and accountable to the electors. What would have been established by the workers government is a democratic state that is able to legislate, via the mass power of the Soviets, to complete the democratic programme. This process would be subject to the acceptance of the Soviets, via the role of universal elections. However, historical experience indicates that the Soviets should be based on more than one party and that bourgeois parties should be included within them. The electoral victory of the bourgeois parties would mean the effective end of the democratic stage of the revolutionary process and the victory of counterrevolution. But if the revolutionary process retains a popular character this situation is unlikely to happen, and instead there will be a mandate for the nationalisation of the economy under workers control, and the introduction of democratic planning. In this manner, the success of the democratic revolution will become the pre-requisite for the introduction of socialism.

It could be argued that it is more principled to advance more directly and immediately to the introduction of socialism. But the point is that if socialism is to express democratic legitimacy it will be more sustainable and popular if it is based on the prior realisation of a collection of tasks that could be called the democratic revolution. These are not a diversion from socialism, but instead are politically required if the introduction of socialism is to be feasible and popular. It is to be expected that elements of socialism may have been introduced within the democratic stage such as instances of workers control. Indeed, workers control will be encouraged in order to strengthen and consolidate the democratic revolution as an advance towards the prospect of transition to socialism. In contrast, to this programme, the Stalinists have a conception of the democratic revolution being carried out by means of Parliament. This conception is not related to any detailed recognition of the role of the class struggle, and there is no mention of the role of Soviets. Hence it will be Parliament that introduces legislation that also advances the cause of socialism such as nationalisation. But this process will be under the control of the party state and not represent the development of workers control. Furthermore, it is assumed, but not mentioned that this development will result in the formation of the single party state. Consequently, the limitations of bourgeois democracy will be replaced by a situation of non-existent democracy. To define this situation as the completion of democratic revolution, and the advance to socialism, would be absurd. Instead the actual political freedom of the working class would be less than that under developed capitalism. The cause of the emancipation of the working class would not have been advanced. Instead the political basis for the greater exploitation of the working class would have been created. But in actuality, the working class of Europe was ultimately wary of supporting the cause of the Stalinist parties because of these concerns. Instead they preferred the flaws of capitalism instead of the greater potential limitations of Stalinism. Ultimately the ability of the Stalinists to achieve power was reduced to the military might of the Red Army. Concerns about its commitment to democracy meant the Western Communist parties had limited mass appeal. Only in the era of Euro-Communism did the Communist parties make an explicit commitment to uphold bourgeois democracy, but this also meant the aim of socialism became effectively rejected.

It is suggested by the Stalinist authors that the revolutionary process is uneven because the conditions are more favourable in some countries than others for the overthrow of capitalism because of the acute intensification of the economic and political contradictions. This perspective is partially true because the October revolution occurred in a situation of increasing international discontent and the development of the possibility of world revolution. The point is that the October revolution could not have taken place without the development of unrest caused by the world war. Furthermore, the economic crisis of the 1930’s generated the prospect of revolution in a number of European countries and only the reactionary influence of Social Democracy and Stalinism undermined the prospect of the overthrow of capitalism. However, this does not mean that the political situation does not develop in an uneven manner and therefore means that the conditions become favourable for the success of revolution in a given country at a particular moment in time. The success of a revolution in Germany in the 1920’s or 1930’s would have inspired the international struggle against capitalism within Europe. But the defeat of the revolutionary process in Germany meant the international dimensions of the class struggle were never really realised. Instead the defeat in Germany was followed by struggles in Spain and France. The Second World War also led to generalised unrest in Europe and this was repressed by the Soviet invasion of Eastern Europe, and the reactionary role of bourgeois democracy in the West. In the present period, the onset of globalisation means that national based revolution is problematical and only simultaneous revolution can generate sufficient economic and political power to defy the forces of global capital.

The authors rightly maintain that we cannot rely on the development of world war for the prospect of revolution in the age of nuclear weapons. The ‘socialist’ camp has expanded because of world war but this was before the development of the cold war and the prospect that any new world war would result in global catastrophe. But this does not mean that the prospect of socialism is over because the success of revolution depends on the strengthening of the working class and the related importance of its political consciousness. However, the problem with this apparent political confidence was that the cold war tended to generate splits within the working class into pro and anti-Soviet opinions. This meant significant sections of the working class were loyal to the aims of the USA and critical of the USSR. Consequently, the possibility to develop an oppositional anti-capitalist consciousness was undermined. But this development did not mean the end of proletarian revolution because the increasing crisis of the 1970’s generated the militancy of the European working class. The Vietnam War also led to radicalisation. The major problem was that both Social Democracy and the Stalinist parties were not orientated to the aim of the overthrow of capitalism, and the Trotskyist parties were too small to be significant. This meant the militancy of the working class was not connected to a conscious struggle for proletarian revolution.

The Stalinist authors connect the development of a revolutionary situation to the role of the Marxist Leninist party: “The political maturity and fighting efficiency of the working class parties are tested precisely during revolutionary crises. A tremendous responsibility devolves on the party. It must not miss any favourable opportunities, must property choose the moment when its call for decisive action will be supported by the broadest masses.”(69) The conception of revolution is based on the primary importance of the party, and its very capacity is based on the ability to motivate and mobilise the masses in favour of the task of the overthrow of capitalism. It is suggested that the party should not engage in an elite process of relying on the vanguard alone, but this does not mean that what is envisaged is a genuinely democratic mobilisation of a mass movement in favour of revolutionary change. Instead the ideal revolution is one in which the party leads the widest strata of the working class to victory. The development in Eastern Europe is conceived as the model.

It is argued correctly by the Stalinists that the attempt to realise revolution should be based on peaceful change. However this prospect depends on the intensity of the class struggle, the external situation and the character of resistance of the bourgeoisie. Thus the intention of the revolutionary process is peaceful, but this may not be realised. Hence the primary aim is the success of the attempt at revolution, but this should be compatible with peaceful change. This approach can be emphasised. The legacy of bourgeois democracy means that the working class will conceive that the conflicts of politics should be resolved in a peaceful manner. Thus it is a duty of the party to propose a strategy for revolutionary transformation that includes the importance of peaceful transition in the change of political power. It is possible that the working class may not support any violent perspective, and will certainly reject the prospect of civil war. Consequently, it is the task of the party to convince the working class that it is necessary to develop armed workers militias that will discourage the prospect of violent counterrevolutionary action by the forces of the bourgeoisie. The role of armed force is in order to uphold the prospect of the peaceful transition of political power. Hence it is the determination of the working class that can bring about peaceful change, any vacillation and indecision can only encourage the possibility of violent counterrevolution and civil war.

In the 1950’s the Stalinists were able to outline an argument that suggested the very power of the socialist camp, the strength of the international working class, and the democratic forces, had changed the balance of power between the supporters of capitalism and socialism. This situation had enhanced the prospect of peaceful change. The achievements of socialism, and the prospect of rallying the majority of the national population in favour of the anti-monopoly alliance, contributed to the prospect of peaceful change. The changing relation of forces brings about the possibility of the peaceful overthrow of capitalism. However, in some countries armed struggle will occur in revolutions. This standpoint was understood by the Trotskyists to represent an expression of accommodation to reformism. But this was not the basis of the reformism of the role of the Stalinist parties. Instead it was the diplomatic requirements of the USSR that could undermine the commitment of national Communist Parties to the aim of proletarian revolution. In contrast, the aim of peace as an aspect of revolution was an implicit acknowledgement that the international working class would prefer the revolutionary process to be non-violent. The aspect of adventurism in the standpoint of the Trotskyist organisations did not recognise how bourgeois democracy influenced the consciousness of the working class. The workers favoured peaceful change because of the very character of the bourgeois political system. It was the bourgeoisie who constantly supported violence in support of imperialist aims. Thus, it was the standpoint of socialism which could be related to peace, and the Stalinist view was more perceptive about this issue than the Trotskyists.

What is more problematical is the view that peaceful change can be brought about via the role of traditional organisations like Parliament: “The parliamentary method of transition to socialism would give the working class a number of advantages. The formation of a new power by so traditional an institution as parliament…… would at once endow it with the necessary authority, facilitating the subsequent socialist transformations. Any resistance to the socialist revolution would in this case be illegal…..and aimed against the will of the nation expressed by Parliament.”(70) It is recognised that only the creation of a mass movement outside Parliament can ensure the success of the actions of the revolutionary majority inside Parliament: “Constant contact with the broad masses, with the people’s revolutionary movement outside the parliament, is the chief condition for the success in carrying out any socialist transformations by parliamentary means.”(71) The Parliament will then be in a position to introduce extensive nationalisation that can establish the transition to socialism. What this approach glosses over is the vital importance of the role of the working class. For example, nationalisation can only be meaningful on the basis of workers control, and connected to the role of Soviets, as alternative organs of popular democracy, which is vital for the success of the revolutionary process. What is not recognised by the Stalinist perspective is that Parliament is a bourgeois institution that is not really suitable for promoting revolutionary change. However, the Stalinists can ignore these objections because they can still uphold a conception of party revolution, in which the party leads the working class to socialism via the role of Parliament. This standpoint represents a modified version of the elitist view of proletarian revolution. The party is the active element, and the working class represents the passive mass basis of change.

It is also suggested by the Stalinist authors that there are common basis features of the revolutionary process, but also national peculiarities. This view is an attempt to reject the views of Trotskyists, among others, who deny the importance of specific aspects. This claim may have some validity, but it is necessary to point out that the Communist Parties share a rigid adherence to the perspective of party revolution. Such an aspect remains whether they advocate violent insurrection or peaceful Parliamentary change. Effectively, the model of change is the party controlled process that occurred in Eastern Europe, and the October revolution is interpreted to conform to that model. In contrast, Trotskyism was constantly trying to develop strategies that took into account national and international features, and its emphasis was on the role of popular democracy. Only the Militant tendency tended to uphold a Parliamentary strategy. What was deficient was the lack of a conception of socialism and its relationship to democracy. Only Mandel was innovative in this regard.

SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

The Stalinist authors immediately contradict the claim that the transition to socialism can be peaceful by contending that the revolutionary process in most countries has led to violent counterrevolution, and this situation requires the dictatorship of the proletariat in order to exercise coercion against reaction. The prospect of violent opposition means that even the Parliamentary promotion of socialism will have to become the dictatorship of the proletariat. This implies that the multi-party system of bourgeois democracy will be replaced by single party rule – the party of the proletariat – and so bringing about the effective demise of Parliament. It is maintained that this situation will represent proletarian democracy, or the rule of the majority, but the possibility of the existence of more than one party is effectively rejected: “Enhancing democracy for working people on an unprecedented scale, proletarian democracy, however, cannot be extended to include the overthrown reactionary forces of the bourgeoisie and all the other elements fighting for the restoration of capitalism. That is where proletarian democracy draws the line. The socialist revolution would suffer very great harm if the proletariat granted political freedoms to the organisations of the big capitalists.”(72) This implies that any free elections would automatically benefit the reactionary parties. There is an elitist assumption that the people would vote in favour of the parties of the bourgeoisie. The result of this pessimistic standpoint is that the only form of the dictatorship of the proletariat that is permitted and principled is the situation of one party rule. It is not recognised that the democratic credentials of the dictatorship of the proletariat may be enhanced by the multi-party system. Instead the bourgeois right to vote is contrasted with the democratic character of the proletarian state: “Universal suffrage is the utmost that bourgeois democracy can give. The masses obtain the right to vote, but actually they continue to be debarred from participation in government. After the socialist revolution the broad popular masses have every opportunity for daily practical participation in state affairs, both directly through government bodies and through their public organisations and numerous commissions, committees and councils set up under the organs of power.”(73) The problem is that one form of participation is at the expense of the inability to vote in multi-party elections. The democratic gains of bourgeois democracy are ended in order for proletarian democracy to be realised. This situation can only undermine genuine proletarian democracy because the state becomes dominated by the members of the single party. Hence the state is bureaucratised and is not a genuine expression of participation of the working class. The establishment of a multi-party system would help to improve the activity of proletarian democracy. This was the point made by Rosa Luxemburg.

The importance of the alliance of the workers and peasants is acknowledged by the Stalinists. But this understanding is not realised in practice because of the effective repression of the peasantry in the name of socialism in the late 1920’s. It is also argued that the state is democratic and based on the participation of working people in its organs, but what is admitted is that the local organs are subordinated to central organs, which is defined as democratic centralism, and so it is effectively admitted that the state is effectively administered by a bureaucracy. This elitist view is reinforced by the admission that the party has the most important role for the supervision of society: “It now becomes responsible for everything that goes on in society, for the policy of the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the development of the productive forces and culture, for the improvement of the people’s welfare.”(74) The effective admission that the state belongs to the party is justified on the basis that this is the only way to bring about material and cultural improvements for the people. Thus it is being argued that it is too difficult and complex to try and construct a society based on genuine democratic participation of the people. Instead: “The revolutionary transformations that the working class power is required to carry out are so complex and the forces opposing the building of the new society so strong that success can be achieved only if the proletariat displays unanimous will and profound understanding of the laws of social development; in short, only if it has a clear-cut programme of action. The working class gets all this from its vanguard, from the most politically conscious and staunch section, which is able consistently to express the interests of the proletariat and all working people.”(75) Only with the role of the Marxist Leninist party is it possible to conduct a successful struggle for socialism.

The tenuous assumption is that a party which has effective uncontrolled power within society is able to utilise its dominant position without undermining the trust of working people. The party is an un-corruptible elite that is able to utilise its effective exercise of state power in the interests of working people and the aim of socialism. It is able to use a superior knowledge of social laws in order to promote the possibility of the successful construction of socialism. The party acts on behalf of the class in order to carry out its historic mission of creating socialism. Thus even in the era of the cult of the individual, or Stalin’s despotism, the party is still considered to be the expression of the interests of the working class and able to promote the building of socialism despite the excesses of the one person dictatorship. This standpoint is disputed by Max Shachtman. He denies that the party can act on behalf of the class in relation to socialist tasks, and instead suggests that if the state belongs to the party the result is not the creation of socialism and instead the generation of a new ruling class. (76) This standpoint is denied by the Stalinist authors who argue that the very complexity of the building of socialism means that it must act as enlightened elite. The working class by its own efforts cannot build socialism, and therefore only a party dedicated to the interests of the working class can promote the construction of socialism. Hence it is not surprising that the Stalinist authors conclude that only a one party state, or the domination of the Marxist Leninist Party, is most conducive to the creation of socialism. It is the very historic mission of the CPSU to advance the development of socialism which explains the exclusive and dominant role of the Marxist-Leninist Party.

This standpoint cannot be accepted by genuine Marxists. We would argue that the role of the party in the creation of socialism is secondary, its role is to assist and advise the working class, but not to justify a dominant position within society. Marx was emphatic that socialism and communism can only be constructed by the working class, any elitist alternative can only result in bureaucratic deformations and distortion that do not result in the creation of socialism. This is why the role of an enlightened elite undermines the successful completion of the tasks necessary to create socialism. Instead its actions can only result in the creation of a new exploitative society. In contrast, the Stalinists are arguing that the CPSU is benevolent and enlightened and therefore capable of providing leadership in the process of creating socialism. This is an illusory claim, instead of socialism what has been created is a regime based on the domination of the single party and the working class is still a subordinated part of society. The CPSU would reject this claim and instead contend that its role of leadership is connected to bringing about the participation of the working class in the construction of socialism. However, this view is itself undermined by the fact that the party openly admits that it is responsible for the various programmes of socialist development. Furthermore, the party ensures the realisation of its policy via its influence within the state apparatus, but this activity is justified in terms of the understanding that the party acts as a guide to the various state organs and is not a substitute for them. The party enjoys the support of working people, which could result in the ideology of infallibility and the problem of careerism. Therefore the party has to be democratic and so ensure that these issues do not arise, and it also has to be wary of the development of factions that would undermine its unity, like the Trotskyists. The success of these factions would mean the end of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The argument of the CPSU is that it can continue to act as the leadership of the working class, and so direct the process of the development of socialism. Any questioning of this role could promote the importance of factions within the Bolshevik party, such as the Trotskyists, and they are effectively the expression of the interests of capitalism, even though they have a programme of world revolution! This standpoint implies that the only legitimate political opinion within society and the CPSU is that of its inner leadership. Any other dissenting voice within either the party or the working class is effectively the viewpoint of the forces of capitalist restoration. Therefore the monopoly of legitimate opinion within society is restricted to the inner circles of the leadership. Hence the conception of socialism is based on the views of the general secretary of the CPSU, and his politburo. In this context the idea of socialism based on the application of genuine proletarian democracy is a nonsense. The only people who can have valid ideas about socialism are the very highest levels of party organisation. Thus the following view is an illusion: “The dictatorship of the proletariat thus creates a whole system of democratic government based on the activity and independent initiative of the broad masses. For the first time, the government apparatus cease to be divorced from the people, a feature inherent in the exploiting state which inevitably engenders such a social phenomenon as bureaucracy.”(77) In a situation where the only expression of political freedom is limited to the highest levels of leadership, it is inevitable that the state is not an expression of the aspirations of the working class and is instead the representation of the interests of a bureaucratic stratum. The authors are unintentionally right to connect this state bureaucracy with the role of an exploiting class. It is admitted that bureaucratic distortions can occur, but these are presented as a problem of the past and the backwardness of the economy. Thus the relationship of the party-state to bureaucracy is denied.

Only the genuine participation of the working class in the state apparatus would make this administration a workers state. But this would imply the development of genuine proletarian democracy based on the free exchange of views between individuals and parties. But this prospect is denied by the CPSU as a rejection of its leading role in the construction of socialism. However, the CPSU argues that it consults with the trade unions who have an important role in the construction of socialism. But this does not mean that there is genuine workers control of production, which is considered to be an expression of the autonomy of the enterprise and would mean the undermining of the nationalisation and planning of the economy. Instead the involvement of the trade unions in the process of socialist construction is reduced to that of consultation, and the trade unions never defy the views of the party. Hence the trade unions are not independent like the trade unions in the West, they never engage in strikes and do not conduct negotiations about collective bargaining. The level of wages is established by the manager of the enterprise. It is also argued that the Soviets, as the political organisation of proletarian democracy, are guided by the leading role of the party, and the conclusion to be drawn from the experience of the USSR is explicit support for the rule of one party: “The Communist party became the only party in the country fighting for the aims which accorded with the interests of the working people. The one party character of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR was thus the result of the concrete conditions of class struggle.”(78)

Some Trotskyists have not argued against the principle of a one party state because to them what is reactionary is not the denial of political freedom but instead the rule of the Stalinist party. They would substitute the domination of the Stalinist party with that of Trotskyism. This procedure would not advance the cause of human emancipation. This is because the very expression of the reactionary character of Stalinism is its justification of one party rule. Furthermore, the limitations of Leninism was based on its acceptance of the dominating influence of the sole revolutionary party. The only principled basis to overcome this problem is by ending the party-state and instead establishing a genuine multi-party system. This does not necessarily mean an end to the role of the Soviets and their replacement by Parliamentary institutions, instead it is possible to have the pro bourgeois parties participating in Soviet elections. Hence it is possible to realise the advantages of the Soviets without justifying one party rule. In contrast one party rule has been shown to have resulted in despotism and individual dictatorship. This political situation cannot advance the cause of socialism. Only with real political freedom is it possible to promote the building of a better type of society.

The Stalinists also refer to the model of the creation of the Peoples Democracies. It is outlined how the political situation in Eastern Europe was initially characterised by broad democratic revolutions against Fascism. Differences within the alliance between the working class and bourgeois parties meant this coalition collapsed and was replaced by the hegemony of the Communist party. This situation led the Peoples Democracies to create the dictatorship of the proletariat. The multi-party system accepted the leading role of the Communist party. The state was often transformed during the democratic phrase of the revolutionary process, and this made it suitable for the task of socialist construction. This supposedly innovation is connected to the bureaucratic character of Stalinism. At no period did the process of ‘revolutionary’ change involve the working class. Instead in a very bureaucratic manner the bourgeois state was purged of reactionary bourgeois elements, and this prepared the basis for the end of capitalism via the introduction of extensive nationalisation. (79) The multi-party system was an empty form because the real political power was with the Communist party and the society became part of the Soviet empire.

The Stalinist view is that the development of bourgeois democracy in Western Europe also implies the prospect of a transition to socialism that will involve less coercion, and involving the role of Parliament. In this sense the multi-party system will prove to be compatible with the development of socialism. But the assumption is that other parties will have to accept the leading role of the Marxist-Leninist party: “Other political parties can exist side to side with the Marxist-Leninist Party during the transition period provided that they stand for the abolition of monopoly capital rule and support the policy of socialist construction.”(80) This is not a reassuring defence of multi-party democracy. The assumption is that it can only exist on the basis of support for the actions of the Communist Party. This suggests that multi-party democracy is a formality and the only genuine political system is based on one party rule. The actual principled character of real democracy is based on the acceptance that parties should accept the right of opponents to disagree with them. In this instance the right to vote for the parties of capitalist restoration is the only alternative to the despotism of single party rule. The forces of genuine socialism should have nothing to fear from the propaganda of bourgeois parties in this regard, but only the right to effective dissent can be the guiding principle of any democratic society. This point was never accepted by the CPSU, but it was emerging pluralistic democracy that contributed to its downfall.

The Stalinists outline how the revolutionary regime in Russia was confronted with the tasks of socialist construction. These included nationalisation in order to promote industrialisation and the transformation of small farming into equipped and modernised agricultural cooperatives. The latter was carried out despite the resistance of the kulaks, and so the approach of Stalin is still supported. It is maintained that extensive industrialisation meant that the USSR had become socialist by the mid 1930’s. This meant the development of the productive forces is equated with socialism, and the question of how this was carried out is not mentioned. The role of state coercion is glossed over, and the repression of the peasants is justified. There is no outline of any involvement of the workers and peasants in the process of socialist construction. Instead the apparent achievements of economically development under Stalin is uncritically supported, and it is concluded that: “The establishment of social ownership in all branches of the national economy completes the transition from capitalism to socialism. Socialism now develops on the basis of large scale industry and highly mechanised collective farming.”(81) The economic activity is said to be based on the role of the planned economy, meeting the needs of the population and recognising the importance of objective economic laws. This comment does not acknowledge that an important aspect of the intensive industrialisation was the development of a war economy which had priorities that undermined the meeting of needs. Instead there was an emphasis on the creation of the means of production at the expense of the importance of consumer goods. Furthermore, the consumer goods that were produced were often of a low quality and so unwanted. Also, planning became sacrificed to the prestige aims of the CPSU, which meant in voluntarist terms the five year plan had to be completed in four years. This meant balanced and proportionate production became impossible because of the demands of the party.

The economic system is characterised as being without exploitation because there is no private ownership and instead the mass of the people own collectively the means of production and therefore: “Since they jointly own the social property and jointly participate in the social production process, all people are equal and their relations are based on the principles of comradely co-operation and mutual assistance.”(82) This is an illusion because the people do not own the economy because they have no control over its activity. Instead the party through domination of the state controls the economy and on this basis has effective ownership. The working class has to accept the dictates of the plan and has no involvement in its development. This situation of powerlessness means that the working class is exploited even if there is no private ownership of the productive resources. The workers have to accept the wages provided, even if they are not satisfactory in order to realise needs, and the trade unions are unable to bargain on behalf of the workers in order to improve conditions. In this situation there is no equality and instead the party has a privileged lifestyle and this situation of the domination of the economy by the party is accepted by the ideologues of Stalinism: “While the state remains the owner of the means of production, it places them at the disposal of the various collective bodies for their use. In saying that under socialism people consciously direct their own social development, one has in mind that they do this through the party and state, whose function it is to lead and organise the socialist economy.”(83) Hence it is admitted that the only possibility to utilise the means of production is via the dominant role of the control of the state by the party. Hence the very conception of social property is interpreted to mean the direction of the economy by the state. In other words, only in these terms is it possible to understand the process of economic activity which refers to all activity that occurs under the direction of social property by the state. This suggests that the economy is owned by the state, and the state is controlled by the party. However despite this admission the authors reject any suggestion that the role of the state is an expression of bureaucratic domination. They argue that a modern nationalised and planned economy can only occur via the primary importance of the state: “When the state acts as the representative of society as a whole, it must obviously be the state and its central agencies that which, on behalf of society, determine the direction, the proportions and rates of development of the national economy. All the objectively existing possibilities and advantages of socialism become reality only through the economic and organisational activity of the state.”(84)

This statement would be credible if the state was truly accountable to the working class and society in general. But this was not the situation. Instead the state, via the role of the party, dominated and determined the character of economic activity. The result was that the priorities were not those of genuine socialism, and instead the expression of the interests of a privileged bureaucracy. The defence of this situation is that the alternative to the dominating influence of the state would be the creation of small scale production based on co-operatives, and this would become the prelude to capitalist restoration. Certainly, this is one alternative, but what is being primarily denied is the possibility to reconcile centralised production with a democratically run economy. Instead what is being assumed and defended is the view that only an enlightened elite can organise a state based economy. The problem is that this perspective does not justify socialism and instead upholds the administration of the economy by a new bureaucratic ruling class which dominates the state. However this viewpoint is rejected because despite all the justification of elitism it is ultimately argued that the working class control the economy: “Under socialism, the means of production belong to the working people, to their society, and it is obvious that working people cannot exploit themselves. Consequently, surplus value, the result of exploitation, does not exist either.”(85)

This view would be credible for the description of a genuine socialist society, but the working class lack this ability to control the means of production via the role of industrial democracy. Instead their activity is dictated by the plan which is devised by the state planners. Thus the social product, contrary to the claims of the authors, does not belong to the workers as supposed owners of the means of production. Instead this relationship is a fiction and instead the surplus is expropriated by the real owners of the economy, which is the party state. Furthermore, to suggest the workers are constantly attempting to increase material wealth because they receive the fruits of their labour is a fiction. Instead the workers were constantly coerced to increase production because they knew that production did not met their material needs. It is argued that the priority of production is to meet people’s needs, but the real aims are different. The actual priority is to enhance the privileges of the party-state and to this end a surplus is extracted from the workers. Khrushchev was right to suggest that levels of consumption were increasing in the 1950’s, but this was also true of capitalism. The crucial point was that the working class was not able to control economic activity and to that extent authentic socialism was a fiction. Thus the claims made about the advantages of a socialist society were false, or misleading. Only a change in the political situation could have brought about the possibility of principled socialism. But under the existing situation the party domination of the economy acted as a limitation on the development of the productive forces. The party represented a ruling class that could not generate an economy that was able to meet material needs, instead scarcity and shortages were the prevalent situation, and the possibility of plenty was unrealistic under the present economic system. This meant the claims to be building socialism were also false. Instead the task of the modernisation of the economy could only occur under a regime of accumulation and the exploitation of the producers. Therefore socialism could not be created. Only a new proletarian revolution could create the political basis for the possibility of socialism. However, it was necessary to the ideology of the CPSU that the perspective of building socialism was important. Thus anyone who denied this claim was considered to be a vicious opponent of the USSR. This is why Trotskyism could not be reconciled with the CPSU. Trotskyism would remain the primary opponent of the CPSU because it rejected the view that socialism was being built. But this standpoint was sometimes compromised by sections of the Trotskyist movement.

The authors claim that the Soviet economy is based on proportionate development, or the establishment of the right balance between production and consumption at each given period of economic activity. Hence the emphasis is on the means of production at the early period of industrial development, and on the role of consumption as the productive forces increase. It is possible to continually alter the proportions within the economy according to the plan without creating instability. This claim is lacking in credibility because the Soviet economy has continually failed to create high quality consumer goods and so there has been waste and over-production. The economy has also been orientated towards defence which means that the material needs of the population have often been neglected. However, the authors deny this situation and instead contend that the economy has requirements based on the aspirations of the population: “The participation of the workers themselves and the fact that the plans are compiled on the basis of the general experience accumulated in the course of the productive work guarantees that the national economy is guided along correct lines…..Centralised state planning is combined with socialist democracy, with the initiative and spontaneous activity of the working masses.”(86) This claim may have some truth to the extent that meetings of workers about the plan did take place, but the possibility of these meetings to alter the priorities of the plan were non-existent. The actual aims of the plan were decided by the central planners under the direction of the leadership of the CPSU. It is absurd to envisage that the workers would voluntarily accept their exploitation in relation to the aims of the planning process. The real balance of power is indicated by the fact that the workers have no trade unions and are unable to bargain to improve their economic situation. Thus the meetings about the plan do not bring about any substantial change and instead only confirm the original aims and priorities of the plan.

Ultimately it is accepted that the activity of the producers is defined and dictated by the state. Thus the very ability of the working class is defined in terms of the primary importance of the centralised organs of the state: “Only the creative work of all members of the society can transform the enormous potentialities of socialism into reality. The economic and organisational activity of the socialist state and its organs plays a decisive part in this respect. Not only are the production targets for the collectives of working people set by the state, it also organised their work to ensure these aims are reached.”(87) Hence, it is admitted that the actual conditions of work are not freely established by the producers, but instead by the imperatives of the state. This situation implies that the aims of the plans is to extract a surplus product from the producers, and this intention is something that cannot be challenged by the wishes of the workers. Instead the aims of the plan have to be accepted by the producers, who are expected to implement the economic dictates of the state.

It is argued that whilst capitalism has been ended, the importance of commodity relations exists in limited terms. Labour is no longer a commodity that sells labour power, but the goods produced have a price that expresses the value that is required to produce it. This explains the process of exchange between industry and agriculture. Hence the role of money is also important. The law of value indicates which commodities required less labour expenditure and so are cheaper than other commodities. Value helps to determine which goods are most economical, but its role is subordinate to the aims of the plan. It is necessary to reconcile the requirements of the plan with that of value. This standpoint would have credibility if the results of production was the generation of efficiency in the form of high quality goods. In relation to capitalism quality is ensured by market competition which means the inferior goods are not sold and become unwanted. This criteria is not present in the USSR, and instead value is nothing more than an indication of the cost of production. It does not define the issue of the quality and demand for the commodity. What is necessary is that the role of the market be allowed more freedom in order to promote the production of high quality goods. It was necessary to allow consumer demand to determine which goods should be produced. Instead of allowing this incentive the role of the market was supressed, and the plan had priorities that had no relationship to market demand. The result was inefficiency and waste.

The Stalinist authors claim that the character of labour has become transformed in the USSR: “In place of the old labour discipline built on coercion, a new conscious discipline becomes established, which is based on the fact that every worker understands his duty towards society and has a personal interest in his labour.”(88) In this context it is argued that the development of productivity through forms of co-operative labour, and the utilisation of the latest methods of science and technology, are encouraged. But this understanding is illusory. The major method to create labour discipline has been coercion, which was most apparent in the period of industrialisation, and this is why workers have rebelled against this situation by increasing rejecting the implementation of the directives of plant management. There has been mass discontent caused by the alienation of the work process. This dissatisfaction has also been connected to the inequality in wage payments. The Stalinists defend this situation in terms of wages being based on levels of productivity and according to work. But what this means in practice is glaring wage differentials and this causes resentment which contributes to the condition of alienation. It is maintained that an emphasis on the production of the means of production, or Department 1, will create the material conditions for the development of consumer goods, or Department 2. Thus the aim is to generate the objective conditions that result in the most rapid advance of consumption goods. The problem has been that this aim has been undermined by the low quality of consumer goods, which means they are unwanted and unused. The goods produced lack a genuine use value. This means that there is considerable waste and the scarcity in society continues. The result was people spent immense amounts of time trying to obtain the goods they needed. The private market became indispensable in this regard.

It was claimed that the USSR had become a classless society based on the friendly relations between the workers, peasants and intelligentsia. Therefore: “All classes and strata became equal in their relations to the means of production, to the state and political power, in their rights and duties. No one can any longer appropriate the means of production and use them for exploiting other people.”(89) All social and political privileges are said to have been overcome, and any remaining distinctions have a non-antagonistic character. Consequently, the intelligentsia has originated from the working class and does not represent a privileged layer within society. What this analysis ignores is that the party state does promote the exploitation of the producers within the economy because of its control of the priorities of economic activity. This means there is important social inequality between a ruling class and the various subordinated classes. Both the peasants and the workers are considered as being the potential basis for the extraction of a surplus.

One of the most important modifications in Marxist theory defended is the view that the state does not wither away. It is argued that the state is no longer an instrument for the suppression of classes, but it retains a leading role within the economy and social relations, and is needed to tackle the influence of bourgeois ideology, and to carry out the external function of defence. This role is connected to the promotion of peaceful co-existence and the consolidation of relations between the countries of the world socialist system. It is suggested that the methods of coercion are replaced by those of persuasion, and it is also important to tackle any problem of bureaucracy: “Taking this into account, the Party wages a continuous struggle against bureaucracy, for the consolidation of the bonds between the machinery of state, and the masses, it develops and strengthens socialist democracy.”(90) This standpoint is a partial expression of reality. The enduring role of the state essentially represents the continuing social tensions within society, and the necessity of the state to contain and supress them. This is why it is obvious that the state still represents an organ of distinctive importance within Soviet society. However, this coercive and conforming role is glossed over, and instead its activity is justified in terms of defining the role of the state as economic, cultural, and in order to uphold the necessity of defence against opponents. This would seem to express a common sense view that the founders of Marxism could not have anticipated these contemporary reasons for the longevity of the state. Interestingly, it is also acknowledged that the state is capable of bureaucratic distortions and so it is necessary to end this problem and extend socialist democracy. What is not admitted is that the state is not genuinely democratic, and so does not encourage the realisation of the rights of the people in democratic terms. However this view is rejected and instead it is maintained that democratic rights are upheld. The actual coercive role of the state is ignored and instead there is emphasis on the importance of persuasion. Furthermore, the fact that this society is a party state is not admitted. Hence the most important reason for the state is not outlined, which is that the state is required in order to uphold the domination of the party. This state cannot be genuinely democratic because this would mean the end of the hegemony of the party.

Indeed, this lack of real democracy is presented as a virtue by the CPSU: “As for socialist democracy, it I not directionless democracy, but directed democracy, i.e., democracy directed by the party and the state in the interests of the further development of socialism and the building of Communism.”(91) In other words this means the party is considered to be the most democratic expression of Soviet society: “For the party embodies in its activities the will of the masses, millions strong, and represents the most democratic organisation of socialist society. Its leadership most fully personifies the principles of genuine democracy.”(92) This boast about the democratic character of the CPSU does not admit that the real test of this claim would be the holding of genuinely free elections. The actuality of the single party rule does not allow for any principled testing of the supposed democracy of the CPSU. Instead the claims about the superiority of socialist democracy is conceived in terms of the creative initiative of the masses being realised by involvement in the activity of the state organs and the Soviets, and there is the right of recall by voters of members of Soviets. But these apparent expressions of democracy are formal without the right to vote for competing parties. The problem is that the Soviets effectively implement the instructions of the CPSU because it is the single and dominant party. If the Soviets were able to form a government this situation could only arise on the basis of the development of multi-party democracy. The political problem is not with the institution of the Soviets, but is instead because of the lack of effective democracy. The Soviets could have been revitalised as effective expressions of the popular will if their role was to form a government based on the results of free elections. To some extent this situation did occur under Gorbachev, but the problem was that people were increasingly interested not in the revitalisation of the Soviets and instead favoured capitalist restoration. The major issue became not the end of single party rule and instead the question of the change of the economic system. What seemed to be most important was the issue of socialism or capitalism. The failure of Perestroika meant that Glasnost seemed to be irrelevant. In contrast, genuine Marxists considered the revival of genuine Soviet democracy as the basis to bring about the necessary economic change. But this standpoint had few supporters because of demoralisation and the increasing acceptance that the restoration of capitalism was inevitable.

The Stalinist authors are concerned to defend the integrity of the Soviet empire and the multi-national character of the USSR. This is why they are for voluntary unity of nations and increasing economic and cultural progress of all nations, but they are also opposed to the exercise of the right of self-determination. They accept the validity of this right, but are also adamant that it should never be exercised: “The granting of such a right does not at all mean that each nation is invited, or still less, compelled to secede, to break state ties with the nation with which it formerly belonged in s single state. Such an interpretation of the right to self-determination would merely play into the hands of international capital, which is interested in dividing the nations of the socialist countries and then crushing them one by one.”(93) Thus the right to self-determination should never be exercised because it is effectively in support of international counterrevolution and denies the fact that on the basis of socialism the backwardness of formerly oppressed nations can be overcome as part of the USSR, or world socialist bloc. It is argued that the very development of socialism overcomes the divisions between nations and instead creates unity. This standpoint is illusory and ignores the national tensions created by the Soviet empire. The actual demise of the Soviet empire in 1989 indicated the accurate situation in that no country wanted to remain in an economic or political relationship with the disintegrating USSR. The conception of socialist patriotism or affection of the nation combined with internationalism was generally a fiction. The reality was nationalism and the sense of proletarian internationalism could not develop because of the national inequality created by the reality of the Soviet empire, and the domination of Russia within the USSR. Consequently no one believed the propaganda that there was a world socialist system based on the unity of free and equal states. It is true that to a certain extent there was a world ‘socialist’ system that is opposed to capitalism and is based on the leadership of the USSR. But this system is not to the mutual advantage of its particular nation states and instead was dominated by one powerful country, the Soviet Union.

Ultimately the question of the character of socialism and its success is reduced to the role of the Marxist-Leninist Party: “In these conditions tremendous importance attaches to the activities of the Marxist-Leninist Party, the vanguard of the working people, in which the collective intellect and will of socialist society is expressed most fully and comprehensively. Correct and skilful leadership by the party is an indispensable condition for realising all the intrinsic potentialities and advantages of the socialist system.”(94) Thus it is no surprise to learn that the Communist Party is indispensable for the transition to communism: “The leadership of the Communist Party is one of the decisive factors making for the great achievements of socialism. It is a guarantee of progress, of the successful solution of the great task of transition to communism confronting the society that has built socialism.”(95)

Thus the one constant aspect of the ideology of the CPSU is justification of its dominant role within socialist society. It is the party which is crucial for ensuring the success of the development of socialism, and so enhancing the possibility of communism. Formally, this vanguard role is connected to reference to the creative activity of the working class, but in effective terms the importance of the people for the construction of socialism is ignored. Instead the party is the bulwark and principled expression of the possibility to create socialism, and so in this manner the single party state is justified. The assumption is that without the role of the Communist Party socialism would not have been successful. In this context even the period of the cult of the individual did not undermine the ability of the party to advance the aims of socialism. Only various factional opponents were an expression of the forces that could have undermined the successful attempt to generate socialism. This is why the monopoly rule of the party is crucial because no other agency could have brought about the successful realisation of the transition to socialism. Thus it is implied that the CPSU acted on behalf of the working class and carried out its historic mission. This elitist understanding does not allow for the consistently democratic conception of the development of socialism based on the genuine participation of working people. Instead socialism is the creation of an enlightened elite. This Jacobin view is a one-sided conception of Bolshevism and ultimately is based on the views of Stalin. This standpoint is inherited by the party under Khrushchev despite the rejection of the despotism of the cult of the individual. The very aspect that is being defended is the effective right of the party to run society in the interests of its members, and the historical vindication of this task is the creation of the conditions for the transition to communism. The possibility to bring about communism is the task of the CPSU. What is not explained is how the domination of society by the CPSU can bring about a classless society and so avoid the problem of inequality that is implied by the influence of the party. The only resolution of this contradiction is to defend the untenable view that the enlightened elite can uphold the egalitarian principles of communism.

In the discussion of the world socialist camp the mutual relations based on internationalism and respect for national sovereignty are presented in optimistic terms. But the tensions of the Soviet empire were expressed by the Hungarian national uprising of 1956. The Soviet intervention is portrayed in terms of these principles: “The principle of mutual assistance permeates the political relations between socialist states as well. The existence of a powerful socialist camp safeguards the sovereignty and security of each socialist country and guarantees the preservation of the gains of its people’s revolution. A powerful demonstration of this unanimous support the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries rendered the working people of Hungary during the counterrevolutionary uprising provoked by foreign imperialism.”(96) This comment tries to ignore the inconvenient fact that what occurred was a popular national uprising of most of the Hungarian people against the repressive police state regime. The CPSU refused to accept the popular will of the Hungarian people and instead acted to create a pro-Soviet regime. It justified this action as a response to the expression of bourgeois nationalism and the undermining of the unity of the world socialist camp. But in actuality what was occurring was an attempt to uphold the principle of national independence and rejection of the domination of the Soviet empire. However, the view of the CPSU is that the standpoint opposing the domination of the USSR is an expression of the influence of bourgeois ideology. It is argued that the role of the USSR is not superior to that of the other socialist countries, but this very claim has been refuted in practice by the Red Army intervention in Hungary. The USSR is prepared to militarily intervene in order to repress any attempt to establish national independence. The national chauvinism of the USSR is shown by the fact that the CPSU is unwilling to allow the Hungarian people to freely exercise the right of self-determination.

The standpoint of the CPSU is also based on the view that the socialist countries are building an integrated economy based on the principle of the international division of labour. This development is said to be assisted by economic plans of development. But what is not explained is the situation of Soviet imperialism, because the economies of Eastern Europe provided goods that benefited the Soviet economy at prices below those of the world economy. The USSR effectively had an exploitative relationship with the countries of Eastern Europe, and this situation could be described as imperialist. This is the very situation that promoted the national uprisings of the people of Eastern Europe. Thus it is not surprising that in 1989 the countries of Eastern Europe left the Soviet camp and asserted their national independence. This development occurred after a long period of tensions. But the CPSU ignored this discontent because they could define it as a manifestation of bourgeois nationalism, which would be overcome in relation to economic progress of the world socialist camp. In actuality economic progress only intensified the sentiment that the domination of the USSR was anachronistic and should be replaced by a situation of national freedom. The turning point was in 1968 when the most pro-Soviet country, Czechoslovakia, rebelled under the leadership of the national Communist party. The Soviet intervention only emphasised the domination of the USSR over an empire. In theory the CPSU was committed to the principles of national equality but in practice it was concerned to uphold a condition of domination. This situation was not historically sustainable, and this was shown by the working class revolt in Poland in the early 1980’s. The successful character of this struggle indicated that the demise of the Soviet empire was only a matter of time. This prospect became realised because of the effective disintegration of the USSR.

It is argued that the increasing development of the productive forces, the participation of the people in the activity of society, and the ability to control the objective laws of social development, represent the generation of the possibility of communism. But this process could not occur independent of the role of the party: “The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its Central Committee have come forward fully equipped to tackle the new tasks that have arisen before the country in the period of the full-scale building of communism and are accomplishing them in a truly Leninist style.”(97) But it is admitted that the party has had to overcome the cult of the individual of Stalin, and defeat the pro-Stalin faction led by Molotov. It is contended that the party has increasingly listened to the masses about the problems involved in the development of communism and has improved inner party democracy. What is not explained is how the generation of communism is compatible with the domination of the single party elite. The partial answer provided by the authors is that the party understands the character of the historic mission of the working class at each period of social development, and so is able to provide leadership. But this justification means that the Communist party still dominates society in relation to the advent of communism.

However the major justification of the claim that communism is being created relates to the level of the productive forces, the prospect of abundance, and the importance of technical progress like automation. The mechanisation of agriculture has increased, and so has the role of science within production. The cost of production has decreased and the productivity of social labour has increased. The management of the economy has also improved in terms of centralisation and the role of local organs. Labour is becoming less manual and more intellectual. But these claims could be made about the character of the economy in the developed capitalist countries. Hence this does not represent a distinctive view that communism is being created. Instead what is considered important in this regard is that the level of social or state property is increasing within society. State and cooperative farming is merging, and the need for a household plot is diminishing. The aim is to end the differences between town and countryside. The process of physical work is being increasingly subordinated to the role of the intellectual and so the working class is becoming an intelligentsia. This development allows for greater equality in the level of remuneration and society is also increasing resources on consumer goods. But welfare is not about increasing enrichment in private terms. Instead: “Socialism knows a much faster and more rational way of achieving general welfare. It is to concentrate on an ever greater quantity of things and services to the hands of society, which gradually undertakes to satisfy the requirement of the citizens for these things and services.”(98)

The problem with this conception of communism is that what is considered to be features of this society are being realised within capitalism. There has to be something distinctive about communism which is superior to the achievements that can be gained within the process of the development of the productive forces than is possible either under capitalism or socialism. This aspect would be the end of alienating labour, which would continue under socialism because of the division of labour and the necessity of unskilled work, and instead the material and technical conditions will have been realised for the full development of creative work. The issue of abundance is questionable because of the ecological situation but what will have been prepared by socialism is the possibility of the generation of the possibility to realise the full potential of work. This will also mean the promotion of industrial democracy and the ability of producers and consumers to influence and determine the conditions of productive activity and the quality of consumption goods. Under these conditions the classless society will be created and any political organs will be under the control of society. The role of political parties will be changed under these conditions. They will no longer influence people by being ideologically hegemonic and instead will truly express the interests of the members of society.

But this conception of communism is rejected by the CPSU. Primarily it is considered that the aspects of the realisation of communism can only be understood with the influence of the Communist Party. There is nothing to suggest that the most important aspect of the process of transition from socialism to communism is based on the increasing significance of the participation of the working people in the development of the productive forces. Instead of this conception of the increasing democratisation of society as an expression of advance towards communism what is considered vital is that the communist party supervises this process and so the task of creating the classless society is primarily ideological. It is argued that the idea of Communism does motivate the people to strive to realise this aim but the dominant influence in this regard is the role of the CPSU: “The Communist Party strives to spread its world outlook not only among the vanguard, not only among the advanced section of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia, but also among all members of society. This is an immense task. What facilitates its accomplishment, however, is, that Marxism-Leninism is in accord with the basis interests of the working people. This is a guarantee that as society advances to communism the whole people will arrive at a single, Marxist-Leninist world outlook.”(99) This standpoints suggests that even in the Communist society, the CPSU will instruct the people about what to do, and what is permissible. The idea that communism will actually represent a society that is based on the initiative and creativity of the working people is rejected and instead it is assumed that the creation of communism will conform to strict ideological guidelines. It is still assumed that the people will be told what to do by the CPSU which is considered to have a unique understanding of the historic mission of the working class. This is why there is a communist attitude to work based on the standards established by the CPSU. The view is that the character of work is still based on standards imposed by external organs like the CPSU, and the working class is not considered to be ideologically mature to develop its own ability to raise production and advance the prospect of communism. The party is considered to be crucial in the educational work of the creation of a communist morality based on collectivism and the rejection of selfish individualism.

In other words the very process of advance towards communism actually implies that the influence of ideological standards becomes greater on the population. The role of the CPSU is vital if communist ethics is to become the norm for the behaviour of Soviet citizens. The implicit assumption is that without the ideological role of the CPSU the working class would be likely to regress to the level of behaviour associated with bourgeois values. This paternalistic view does not recognise that the very advance towards Communism would mean the role for ideology would be overcome. The importance of socialist ideology would be replaced by the free and creative ability of the people to create a classless society. Instead the CPSU can only conceive of the continuous need for instruction of the people in order to undermine the influence of bourgeois ideology. This represents a pessimistic and elitist view of politics in a communist society.

However it is argued that the process of the democratisation of society has been enhanced with the increasing importance of the Soviets, local economic organs and the trade unions. The state is increasingly based on methods of persuasion and the deceased role of compulsion. Increasingly the activity of the state is being merged with that of society. The state is already being transformed into organs of public self-government. Thus the continued necessity of the state because of means of defence does not mean that the general process is not one of withering away, or the external activity of the state being replaced by that of society. However, this perspective is undermined by the fact that the importance of the party is not diminished by this process. The role of the party increases in the transition to communism, and so an important organ of the state is maintained: “The growing role of the Communist party as the guiding force of society is a characteristic feature of the development of socialist democracy in the period of transition to communism. This is necessary in the interests of society as a whole, in the interests of building communism.”(100) In other words, this situation is justified on the basis that the very merging of the organs of the state and society require the party to become the leadership of the public organisations: “The role of the Party also increases in view of the shifts in the mutual relations of the state and public organisations. As the state gradually transfers many of its functions to public organisations, the party increasingly comes to the foreground as the leader of all of society and the guiding force among all public organisations. The party directs both the process of the withering away of the state and the activities of the trade unions and other public organisations, helping them to assume the new place which they are called upon to take with the approach to communism.”(101)This is justified by maintaining that the members of the Communist Party have high standards of behaviour that promote a communist consciousness that will influence all of society.

However, this defence of the role of the party in the process of the withering away of the state undermines the perspective that this is an important aim of the transition to communism. The party has been the primary aspect of the state and directed its policy and activity. Hence to contend that the party will supervise the process of the withering away of the state implies that nothing dramatic has changed. Instead the aspects of the party state will have been retained. What would ensure that a genuine process of transition to communism would be the demise of the leading role of the party and instead its replacement by the popular democracy of working people. Instead of this possibility the strict control of society by the CPSU is to be continued. This situation seems to undermine the perspective that the organs of the state are being replaced by those of society. Instead the role of the party still acts as the state and the public organs will be subordinated to this leading role of the party. The actual dismantling of the state will require the end of the dominant role of the party.

It is argued that an indicator of the realisation of communism in the USSR is when it overtakes the per capita production in the USA. But this situation would just mean that the USSR was more ‘efficient’ than the USA. What would not be explained is that the USA, on the whole, is still able to provide a better standard of living than the USSR, and is able to provide better quality consumer goods. The USSR is characterised by waste, shortages and low quality production, and consumption is still low. The ability of the USSR to produce an absolute amount of goods that is higher than the USA would not overcome this problem. It is also predicted that the other socialist countries will also soon be able to realise communism. This is based on the high rates of capital accumulation and industrial development. Plus, the advantages of specialisation and mutual assistance. But in reality the Eastern European economy was dominated by the requirements of the USSR, and increasingly became dependent on the world economy. This situation did not mean that communism was economically possible. It is also implied that the success of communist construction in the USSR will inspire the peoples of the world. But what is problematical is the very criteria utilised in order to suggest that communist construction is forthcoming. Instead what is apparent is that the most developed countries of capitalism are able to produce greater and higher quality goods that are better able to meet the material needs of their people. This objectively means the ideological appeal of capitalism is more effective than the claim that communism is about to be constructed in the USSR.

Thus there is a contradiction between the theory of Marx about the character of communism and the practice of the USSR. The CPSU claims that the utilisation of science within production and the modernisation of agriculture represents the generation of abundance. It is argued that the principles of socialism, combined with large scale machinery and technology has led to abundance. But it is questionable whether this is the actual situation. Instead a repressive party state has promoted an economy in its interests and so the rapid development of the productive forces was to the benefit of the new exploiting class. This mean the creation of the surplus was not a material expression of the aim of abundance. Instead the beneficiary was the new ruling class. This also means that labour is not developed according to the priorities of talent and ability, and instead coercion is utilised in order to ensure that labour acts in accordance with the aims of the system. Hence distribution in accordance with needs does not occur. Instead the ability to meet needs is inadequate and often people went without necessities because of the economic limitations of the system. Thus there is a contradiction between Marx and Engels description of socialism and communism and the reality of the USSR. The CPSU claim that socialism has been built because: “It is only when the means of production become public property and exploitation of man by man is made impossible that a way is opened to actual, not simply formal, equality of people, to their real emancipation.”(102) But historical development meant that it was possible to exploit labour on the basis of nationalised property, and so the promise of a communist society in terms of the realisation of equality and freedom did not occur. Instead there was the repression of a one party state. The promise of public self-administration based on principles of co-operation and solidarity has not occurred. Nor was there the development of equality between the countries of the so-called socialist bloc based on mutual assistance. Instead the reality was the domination of the Soviet empire.

We conclude with trying to provide an explanation of the confidence of the Khrushchev era. It was a period when the leadership of the CPSU really did believe that historical development had made possible the victory of communism over capitalism. But this standpoint was based on ignoring the continued superiority of the USA and also glossing over the limitations of the USSR. The reality was that capitalism was in a boom and based on the supremacy of the USA, and the USSR was still recovering from the war and the legacy of Stalin. What was not acknowledged was the long-term disadvantages of the Soviet system and the inability to develop the productive forces. The Soviet economy was characterised by waste and shortages and this meant it could not be constructing communism. But what created the illusion that communism could be built was the voluntarist illusion that the hegemony of the CPSU could ensure that the aim of communism was being realised. It was not recognised that under the domination of an enlightened elite it was not possible to build the classless society of communism. Furthermore, it was not recognised that the CPSU was an instrument of bureaucracy, corruption, and repression. Instead in illusory terms it was considered to be an agency of inner party democracy and the promotion of a classless society. Hence the doctrine of the CPSU was ultimately based on illusions about the very role of the party. The party could not be self-critical because it could only envisage itself as the instrument of the historical mission of the working class. This means its actual anti-socialist character could not be recognised. But the very tension between party and class characterised society, and the privileged role of the party undermined its claims to be promoting socialism and communism. Ultimately the claim to construct communism by 1970 was an empty boast. This point was recognised by the leadership after Khrushchev. The optimism of his period was replaced by that of pragmatic realism and the adoption of cautious policies and ideology. However the increasing crisis of the Gorbachev period led to increasing pessimism. This period was a prelude to capitalist restoration.

FOOTNOTES:

(1)Editor: O.Kuusinen: The Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1961

(2) ibid p166

(3)Christoph Henning: Philosophy after Marx, Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2014

(4)Kuusinen op cit p169

(5) ibid p171

(6)Tony Cliff: The Nature of Stalinist Russia, In Selected Writings, volume 3 London, 2003 p1-137

(7)Kuusinen op cit p182

(8) ibid p196

(9) ibid p199

(10) ibid p205-206

(11) ibid p208-209

(12) ibid p209

(13) ibid p210

(14) ibid p211

(15) ibid p213

(16) ibid p231

(17) ibid p249

(18)Workers Power: The Degenerated Revolution: Prinkipo, London, 2012 p47-72

(19)Max Shachtman: The Bureaucratic Revolution, Donald Press, New York, 1962 p37-73

(20)Kuusinen: op cit: p288

(21)Erik Olin Wright: Envisioning Real Utopias: Verso, London, 2010 p24-25

(22)Kuusinen op cit p317

(23)V.I. Lenin: Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism, In Collected Works, Volume 22, Progress Publishers, 1964 p28-285

(24)Kuusinen: op cit p318

(25) ibid p318

(26)Tony Cliff: op cit: p31-58

(27)Leo Pannitch and Sam Gindin works on post-war capitalism.

(28)Kuusinen op cit p327

(29) ibid p358-359

(30)Ernest Mandel: Late Capitalism: Verso, London 1974

(31)Kuusinen op cit p364-367

(32) ibid p372

(33) ibid p374

(3) ibid p386

(35) ibid p387

(36) ibid p388

(37)Fate of Revolution part two: Jean Van Hiejenourt: The Eruption of Bureaucratic Imperialism, Workers Liberty, London 2015 p386-393

(38)Kuusinen op cit p391

(39) ibid p392

(40Lenin: Strange and Monstrous, In Collected Works volume 27 p72

(41)Kuusinen op cit 397

(42) ibid p405

(43) ibid p405

(44) ibid p406

(45) ibid p410-418

(46)Fate of Revolution 2 op cit p506-511

(47)Kuusinen op cit p423

(48) ibid p428

(49) ibid p461

(50Ibid p468-469

(51) ibid p470

(52)Istvan Meszaros: Beyond Capital, Merlin Press, London 1995 p898-915

(53)Kuusinen op cit p499

(54)Leon Trotsky: The Transitional Programme, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1974 p137-138

(55)Tony Cliff: Permanent Revolution, in Selected Writings Volume 3 op cit p187-202

(56)Kuusinen op cit p546

(57) ibid p567

(58) ibid p578

(59)Fate of Revolution volume 2 op cit p95-100 and 546-549

(60)Kuusinen op cit p580

(61) ibid p589-590

(62) ibid p591

(63) ibid p593

(64) ibid p597

(65) ibid p600

(66)Workers Power: Degenerated Revolution op cit: p105-132

(67)Kuusinen op cit p601

(68) ibid p603

(69) ibid p609

(70) ibid p619

(71) ibid p619-620

(72) ibid p639

(73) ibid p641-642

(74) ibid p645

(75) ibid p645

(76)Max Shachtman: Isaac Deutscher and the End of Socialism, in Fate of Revolution 2 op cit, p655-706

(77)Kuusinen op cit p 650

(78) ibid p655

(79)Workers Power op cit, p460-468

(80)Kuusinen op cit p661

(81) ibid p694

(82) ibid p695

(83) ibid p696

(84) ibid p698

(85) ibid p701

(86) ibid p708

(87) ibid p709

(88) ibid p717

(89) ibid p731

(90) ibid p737

(91) ibid p738

(92) ibid p738

(93) ibid p744

(94) ibid p762

(95) ibid p763

(96) ibid p773

(97) ibid p792

(98) ibid p823-824

(99) ibid p828

(100) ibid p842

(101) ibid p843

(102) ibid p866